

AURAL HEMATOMA

What is a hematoma?

A hematoma is a localized mass of blood that is confined within an organ or tissue. This is also referred to as a “blood blister”. The most common type of hematoma in the dog is that affecting the pinna or ear flap. This is called an aural or ear hematoma.



Why do aural hematomas occur?

Ear hematomas occur when a blood vessel in the ear bursts and bleeds into the space between the ear cartilage and skin. This is most commonly associated with trauma such as scratching or shaking the ears and bite wounds. Dogs with ear infections may violently shake their head or scratch their ears causing an aural hematoma. Dogs with long, floppy ears are at greater risk for developing ear hematomas. Pets with clotting or bleeding disorders may also develop hematomas, with or without a history of trauma.

What can be done?

It is important to treat the underlying cause. The majority of cases are associated with an ear infection. This often causes scratching and head shaking leading to hematoma formation. The hematoma must be treated as soon as possible or permanent disfigurement may result.

The preferred method of treatment involves surgical correction of the hematoma. This usually involves incising and draining the hematoma, removing blood clots and suturing or bandaging the ear to help prevent future recurrence.

If it is a blood blister, won't it disappear with time, just like a bruise?

If left untreated, the surrounding ear tissues will die due to lack of blood supply and result in a knurled, cauliflower-shaped ear. Additionally, this condition will produce intense pain and should be corrected as soon as possible.

Can you just drain the swelling?

Drainage may result in a temporary correction, but the hematoma returns in the vast majority of cases. The longer the hematoma is left untreated the greater the likelihood of permanent damage to the ear.

*This client information sheet is based on material written by Ernest Ward, DVM.
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