

## **Aural (Ear) Hematoma**

Hematomas in the ear flaps (aural hematomas) occur when head shaking breaks a blood vessel within the ear flap. The ear flap may partially or completely swell with blood. The swelling may be so large that the opening of the ear canal is blocked off (occluded). The extra weight of the ear flap may be uncomfortable and may lead to a permanent change in the cartilage of the ears. This condition is more common in dogs but can occur in cats as well. The ear flap will feel fluctuant and fluid-filled, like a water balloon.

### **Causes**

There are many possible causes of ear hematomas, including: ear infection, trauma, foreign body (foxtail), middle ear infection, water in the ears, allergies and/or bleeding disorder.

### **What if there is a Concurrent Ear Infection?**

Ear hematomas are commonly caused by head shaking. Generally there is a reason why a dog has been shaking his/her head: an ear infection. This means that the ear infection must be treated along with the hematoma. The ear will need cleaning, microscopic examination of the discharge, and medication. Sometimes ear shaking just happens and there is no underlying infection but be prepared for the expense and trouble of treating an ear infection along with that of the hematoma.

\$80 - \$100 additional if an ear infection is suspected/confirmed

\*Please note this cost is in addition to one of the ear hematoma options if an ear infection is the suspected reason for the ear hematoma

### **Aspiration and Steroid Injection**

This procedure involves using a syringe with needle to remove the fluid contents from the hematoma. The first procedure is typically done while the pet is under sedation to completely evaluate the ear for potential causes of the hematoma. The problem, that can occur, is that a space is left behind when the fluid is removed and this space readily refills with more fluid, leading to temporary results. In most cases, cortisone is then injected into the ear flap to reduce inflammation and scar tissue and promote healing. The benefits of the aspiration method are that it is inexpensive and relatively easy to perform, but the disadvantages are that it may introduce infection and may require multiple attempts as the hematoma may recur. If the clot in the hematoma is already well organized and on its way to scarring, there may not be much fluid left to aspirate and the technique may not work at all. Usually other methods must then be utilized. Most cases, that are going to resolve using this treatment, resolve within the first two treatments; however, the procedure may need to be performed a third time. If there is no success following a third treatment, alternative treatment (surgery) should then be considered. Treatments are typically repeated every 3-5 days for 1-3 treatments.

\$200 - \$300 Price Includes: Initial exam, light sedation, aspiration of hematoma fluid, injection of steroid into the ear flap, e-collar, ear cytology if infection is suspected and go-home medication if necessary. (Additional cost if oral medications or ear infection are noticed during exam: \$50-\$150)

Outpatient Second and/or Third Treatment, if necessary: \$80 - \$100 each treatment

### **Pie-Crusting Sutures**

This method is surgery. Here, an incision is made in the ear flap. The hematoma is drained of fluid and blood clots. To prevent the hematoma from refilling with fluid, multiple sutures are placed in the hematoma area vertically or horizontally, either partly through or completely through the ear flap, with or without ear cartilage removal. Sometimes bandages are applied post-operatively, sometimes not. Sutures are generally left in place for 3 weeks to allow good scarring to take place so that refilling will not occur. The ear flap is essentially quilted to close any space where fluid might refill.

\$1,200 - \$1,500 Price Includes: Initial exam, blood work, ear hematoma repair surgery, anesthesia, medical packs, antibiotic/pain injections, bandaging of the ear, IV catheter and fluids, e-collar and go-home medications

### **Teat Cannula Placement**

Teat cannulas can be placed in a dog's aural hematoma if the ear flap is large enough to accommodate the device. The hematoma is drained of fluids through the cannula and allowed to heal over the next several weeks. This method is generally successful but can carry a high risk of infection and requires the dog to tolerate a gadget inserted into its ear flap for several weeks.

\$600 - \$800 Price Includes: Initial exam, anesthesia/sedation, teat cannula placement, suture, bandaging of the ear, e-collar and go-home medications (Additional cost for blood work and IV catheter if senior pet)

### **What if we Leave it Alone?**

If left alone, an ear hematoma will eventually resolve by itself over time. The fluid will be re-absorbed back into the body and the ear flap will no longer bulge. The problem is that a lot of discomfort and scarring is associated with this process and the ear is often not cosmetically appealing afterwards (it becomes a cauliflower ear). Resolution of a large hematoma can take several months, which may be uncomfortable and/or painful for your pet. If a patient is a poor anesthetic risk, it is certainly reasonable to forgo surgery and allow healing on its own, as long as the original cause of the hematoma is resolved.