

Ear Hematomas

Ear hematomas are common in dogs, cats and people. Most of the time, aural hematomas are considered a traumatic injury. The ear gets a vigorous shake, and pop goes the vessel. Often, this repetitive head shaking and ear flapping is the result of an ear infection or allergies. This can also happen when a pet inadvertently smacks an ear against a hard surface, such as a wall or a coffee table.

But there are other causes, too. Less often, an ear hematoma can occur as a result of a blood clotting disorder. In these cases, failure to clot normally means that even an everyday whack to the ear can lead to a pendulous pinna.

If ear hematomas are left untreated, they can take a reasonably long time to resolve on their own but worse the results are not pretty. When not treated by a vet the ear reabsorbs the blood in a way that's unevenly accomplished, causing what's usually referred to as "cauliflower ear." See pictures below.



Treatment

- In some cases you can **wait for the clot** to reabsorb, however this is really only feasible if the clot is very small.
- The **clot can be drained** by placing a needle into the ear and syringing out the blood. The ear would then need to be bandaged to the head to try and prevent refill. This method can also result in the ear healing a bit misshapen, and there is a significant risk of a hematoma recurring if the dog shakes their head or scratched vigorously.
- The **most effective treatment is surgery**. The ear flap is opened up, clot removed and then the ear is stitched in multiple places to bring back together the pocket created by the hematoma. Recover after surgery can be a sore time as the wound will be left open to drain fluid as it heals, but surgery gives the best chance of a fairly normal looking ear and more importantly results in less likelihood of another hematoma forming in the future, although there is some risk still.

