

Paw Talk



A professional publication for the clients of East Valley Animal Clinic

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Don't go!

If you own a dog, you probably have a story or two about your dog's quirks or unusual behaviors. Some behaviors are cute and endearing and some are just funny. But sometimes, the behavior is a concern for the owner. This is especially true for dogs that have separation anxiety.

Dogs with separation anxiety become anxious when the owner leaves, and can become destructive. Most of our pets give us the big sad eyes when we leave, but settle down and patiently wait for our return. A dog with separation anxiety will start pacing and panting and even shaking before the owner even leaves. Once alone, these dogs can become destructive, causing damage to the home, and in some cases, they can injure themselves while frantically trying to get to their owners.

If you suspect separation anxiety, there are a lot of things that can be done to help your dog remain calm. Most dogs recognize our cues and habits, and that is when they start to become anxious. If we change up our routines, it helps alleviate the

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NSAIDS – Dealing With Pain

Today, we have a variety of medication options to help dogs when they are in pain. From potent opioids like morphine, to anti-inflammatories that help ease arthritis pain, there are many choices. No medication is benign. Some, like morphine, have common side effects such as sedation, nausea and constipation, and can also cause more severe effects such as lowered heart rate and seizures. We carefully base our decision on which medication option is best for your dog on a number of factors, including the type of pain your dog is experiencing, your dog's age and how long we anticipate your dog needing the medication.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs), such as carprofen, firocoxib and meloxicam can be life-saving for dogs with arthritis. Similar to ibuprofen for people, NSAIDs decrease the pain associated with arthritis. In certain dogs, these medications can cause serious problems, such as kidney or liver failure and stomach ulcers. For this reason, it is very important to make sure your dog is healthy before starting an NSAID.

Bailey was a sweet old coonhound dog that became painful and was placed on an NSAID for a short period of time to control the pain. He was doing well until one day when he started vomiting and stopped eating. It was quickly

determined that he needed surgery. In surgery, we discovered that his abdomen was infected from a hole in his stomach that was leaking intestinal contents into his abdomen. Despite our best efforts, Bailey died the next day from the infection. An ulcer from the NSAID is the likely cause of Bailey's death.

While Bailey's case is extreme, it highlights the importance of taking these medications seriously.

If we anticipate your dog needing medication long term, such as a dog with arthritis, we will talk with you about checking lab work to ensure that your dog is healthy enough to take the medication. After checking lab work, we will have your dog try the medication for a couple of weeks to see if it is effective in relieving pain. If it is helping, then we will recheck lab work to ensure the medication has not started causing any problems. Once that is determined, we recommend checking lab work every six to 12 months to ensure there aren't any changes.

It is critical that you never give your pet naproxen, ibuprofen or Tylenol, because they can be fatal to your pet.



Bailey



Ears

Long or short, pricked, floppy or folded, the variety of shapes and sizes of canine and feline ears is fascinating. Ears are responsible for hearing, of course, but they also play an important role in balance. Ears are far more complex than the parts we can see, and their structure is divided into three parts: the outer ear, middle ear and inner ear.

The **outer ear** consists of the flap of the ear, called the pinna, which helps to capture sound and protect the inner parts of the ear, and the ear canal, which is a long narrow tube leading to the middle ear.

The **middle ear** consists of the ear drum (or tympanic membrane) and some small bones known as the auditory ossicles, which transmit vibrations from the ear drum to the inner ear.

The **inner ear**, located deep within the skull, contains nerve endings that detect those vibrations and pass them to the brain. The inner ear also contains the vestibular system, which is responsible for balance.

There are a number of ailments that can plague pets' ears, such as inflammation, infections, ear mites, allergies, seborrhea, cancer and trauma, to name just a few. Signs of problems in pets' outer ears include scratching, head-shaking, inflammation, odor, keeping the ear in an abnormal position (those pets whose ears are mobile), lumps and bumps. Signs of problems in the middle and inner ear include a head tilt, loss of balance or drooping eyelids.

Ear problems can be terribly itchy and/or painful, and they do not tend to heal on their own. Seeking veterinary attention at the first sign of a problem with your pet's ears can help prevent permanent damage to the ear.



Hearing

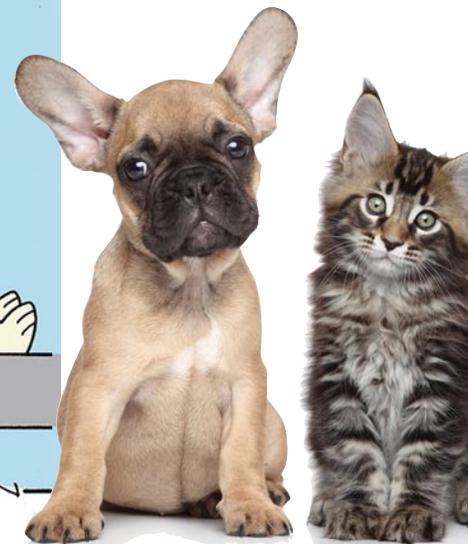
Dogs and cats have superior hearing to humans. Humans can generally hear a range of 20 vibrations per second, or Hertz (Hz), to 20,000 Hz. Dogs can hear from 16 Hz to 60,000 Hz, and their hearing ability tends to vary by breed; dogs with floppy ears that cover the ear canal typically don't hear as well as dogs with perkier ears. Cats' impressive hearing ranges from 55 Hz up to 79,000 kHz. Cats' ability to hear very high-pitched sounds probably helps them when hunting rodents, and helps them to avoid predators as well.

Cats have 32 muscles in each ear, and can independently rotate their ears 180 degrees, allowing them to quickly determine the location of a sound. Dogs' ears have at least 18 muscles, which they use to raise, lower and rotate the pinna. Humans have but three muscles in their ears, so while some people can wiggle their ears, most of us cannot.

Deafness, or the inability to hear, can be acquired or congenital (meaning the animal is born deaf, usually due to a genetic trait). Trauma, chronic ear infections and drug toxicity can cause deafness, and just as with people, pets' hearing sometimes fades as they age. Some breeds are more prone to deafness than others.

The definitive way to determine if your pet is deaf or precisely how well it can hear is with a BAER test. BAER stands for "Brainstem Auditory Evoked Response," and is a procedure that uses small electrodes to measure electrical activity in the cochlea (part of the ear) and the auditory pathways in the brain, similar to the way an EKG measures the activity in the heart. The BAER test is also used on human infants, and is not painful. Most pets do not need to be sedated, and the test only takes about 15 minutes.

Most pets adapt quite well to hearing loss. In fact, many owners are initially unaware of their pet's condition because the animal is so adept at reading cues and figuring out schedules. One of the most important things to remember is to never allow a deaf dog off-leash, and deaf cats should be kept indoors, as they are at a much higher risk of being hit by cars or taken by predators.



"Go home and put on a flea collar. Then let me know if you still hear the little voices."



Otitis Externa

Inflammation and/or infection of the outer ear, or "otitis externa," is one of the top ten reasons for canine vet visits. Typically the problem is in the ear canal, and the pinna (ear flap) may not be involved. Otitis may be acute (sudden onset) or chronic (ongoing), and may occur in one or both ears. Otitis externa can be extremely painful, so it's wise to address the problem quickly.

The most common reason for inflammation in dog's ears is allergies, but there are other causes as well, including a buildup of earwax. The medical term for earwax is cerumen. Cerumen is secreted in the ear canal of all mammals, and serves to help clean and lubricate the ear canal. A buildup of earwax can cause irritation, impede hearing, and it can harbor bacteria and yeast and become a source of infection.

As with people, some pets produce more ear wax than others, so their ears should be checked weekly. Regular cleaning of your dog's ears can help prevent a wax buildup from causing inflammation. Never use a Q-Tip to clean your pet's ears, as you can easily damage the ear canal or ear drum if they shake their head, and you can push wax deeper into the canal. Instead, use cotton balls. Cats are less prone to ear wax buildup, so if you notice excessive wax it's wise to have your veterinarian check it out.

The warm, dark, moist environment of the ear canal, especially in dogs with longer ears, is an ideal location for bacteria and fungus to grow. Dogs that are bathed or swim frequently are more prone to ear problems from moisture.

There are two kinds of ear infections – fungal and bacterial – and the appropriate treatment is different depending on the type. If your dog has recurring ear infections, your veterinarian will likely do a culture to determine the underlying cause. Recurring ear infections are sometimes a sign of a systemic problem such as a thyroid condition, so if your pet repeatedly suffers from otitis externa, additional lab work may be in order.

Ear Mites

Their scientific name, "*Otodectes cynotis*," comes from Greek words meaning "ear biter of the dog," but ear mites really aren't choosy. They most commonly infect cats, but will also spread to dogs, ferrets and other mammals. They can't fly or jump, yet they're highly contagious and can spread from one animal to another after a very brief contact.

Ear mites are tiny, eight-legged parasites that live in the ear canal and feed on the oils and wax in the ears. They create irritation and inflammation, and left untreated they can cause serious skin and ear infections. Signs of infection are often obvious: the intense itchiness causes pets to scratch at their ears, shake their heads and hold their ears back. The pinna (ear flap) may be red and inflamed, and a thick, dark discharge will be present. Severe cases can lead to such discomfort that the pet's scratching and head shaking may result in an aural hematoma (rupture of blood vessels in the ear), which may require surgery to repair.

If ear mites are discovered on one of your pets, all your pets may require treatment, and it will be necessary to thoroughly clean their regular sleeping areas as well.

**"If there were to be universal sound depicting peace
I would surely vote for the purr."
– Barbara L. Diamond**

Aural Hematoma

The visible part of the ear on the outside of the head is called the pinna. The pinna is thin and fleshy, with cartilage and muscles inside to support the structure and movement. The outside should be covered with fur, and although there is hair on the inside as well, the skin underneath is more obvious and should be a healthy pinkish tone.

Trauma to the pinna can result in ruptured blood vessels, which can lead to a pocket of blood known as a hematoma. Hematomas sometimes resolve by themselves, but more often they require veterinary care to heal properly. Depending on the severity, your veterinarian may choose to aspirate the pocket with a fine needle, inject a small amount of a steroid, or it may require surgery. Aural hematomas are painful, and left untreated, they can slowly harden into an odd, lumpy shape known as "cauliflower ear."

While any type of trauma can potentially cause hematomas, such as a young puppy nipping at an older dog's ear, they're often self-induced by a pet that is incessantly scratching its own ears due to itching or irritation.

TIDBITS

Genetic traits are often linked, and hereditary deafness is a common problem in white cats, and dogs with white or merle coats.

According to a study reported by the Cornell University Feline Health Center:

- 65% - 85% of white cats with two blue eyes are deaf
- 40% of white cats with only one blue eye are deaf (and the deaf ear is usually on the same side as the blue eye)
- 17% - 22% of white cats with non-blue eyes are deaf

According to the American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundation:

- About 85 dog breeds have a genetic predisposition for deafness, some with a higher occurrence than others, including Australian Cattle Dogs, Bull Terriers and Dalmatians.





DON'T GO! *continued from pg. 1*

stress. This is just the first of many changes that can be made to help a dog with separation anxiety. There are also medications that can help with anxiety, but it is important to know that there are limitations and significant side effects with medication.

If you suspect your dog has separation anxiety, seeking the help of a veterinary behaviorist is the best way to ensure that the condition is managed, with behavior modification, training for both you and your dog, and if appropriate, medication. A veterinary behaviorist is a veterinarian with additional training in behavior. There are many people who call themselves trainers, and they can be great for obedience and general training, but if your dog has behavior problems, we recommend seeking the guidance of a veterinary behaviorist. We will be happy to give you a recommendation for a local behaviorist.

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Matt and Sher

Meet Aimee

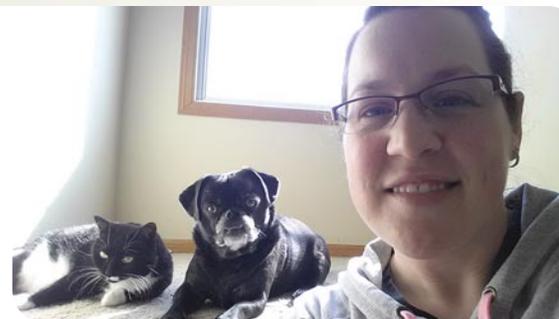
Any time we need a laugh at the clinic, we can always count on Aimee to make us chuckle. Aimee is one of the many Certified Veterinary Technicians employed at East Valley Animal Clinic to ensure your pet receives the best care possible.

Aimee became a certified Veterinary Technician in 2002, and started working for East Valley Animal Clinic in 2007. She is a caring professional, and keeps busy with the many duties for which our technicians are responsible. She also ensures that the clinic is complying with

all hazardous waste management regulations, which is quite a big job. She maintains records of all hazardous waste and ensures it is disposed of in a safe and appropriate manner.

Aimee has a busy life outside the clinic. She and her husband, Michael, are on the go with their two daughters, Heidi and Hannah, who are active in school and other activities. They also make time for Zoey, their 8-year-old "Chug," a Chihuahua and Pug cross, and Libby, their 11-year-old cat.

When Aimee has time, you can find her outside. She enjoys everything the outdoors has to offer, from camping to hiking, fishing and boating.



Aimee with Libby and Zoey

Aimee comments, "I love coming to work!" She enjoys her co-workers and has fun spending time with them outside of work as well as during the workday. You might catch her and some others from the clinic playing volleyball on a local team.