

# Ear Mites in Dogs and Cats

- The scientific name for ear mites is *Otodectes cynotis*.
- Ear mites are contagious to other animals but not to humans.
- Ear mite infestation can cause secondary ear infections, but the mites and infections are both treatable with medication.

### What Are Ear Mites?

Ear mites are small parasites that live on an animal's body, particularly in the ears of dogs and cats. Ear mites sustain themselves by eating skin cells, blood, and earwax. They deposit their waste (a dark, crusty debris) in the ear of the host animal. They also mate and produce eggs in the ear of the host. The mite's entire life cycle is only about 3 weeks, and the mite spends its whole life on the animal. Ear mites are contagious to some other animals (for example, cats, dogs, and ferrets), but they are not contagious to humans.

### Signs of Ear Mites

- Shaking/rubbing of the head and ears
- Dark, crusty debris in the ears
- Itching/scratching
- Secondary ear infections
- Red and inflamed ears

### Diagnosis and Treatment

Ear mites are microscopic. Your veterinarian can find them by examining ear debris under a microscope.

Fortunately, ear mite infestations are very treatable. If ear mites have caused a secondary ear infection, it should be treated while the ear mite infestation is being treated.

Your veterinarian may prescribe ear drops that kill the mites when the medication is applied into your pet's ears. Some spot-on flea and tick medications also kill ear mites. Your veterinarian will examine your pet and recommend an appropriate treatment.

Because ear mites are contagious to other pets, all animals in the household should also be treated. If your pet goes outside frequently and can pick up ear mites again, consider regular use of a flea/tick medication that also controls ear mites.

Ear mite infestation can cause secondary ear infections, but the mites and infections are both treatable with medication.