

Feline Ear Mite Invasion

Dark build-up of blackened crud inside a cat's ear canal can signal an ear mite invasion. If you take a bit of cotton, dampen it with olive oil (or mineral oil) and roll it around the ear gently and pull out sediment that resembles burnt coffee grounds, your cat has ear mites. This sediment is a combination of blood, oils, ear wax, ear mites and waste products.

Ear mites cannot be seen easily by the naked eye. Even though these tick-like mites are white, they are microscopic. Ear mites live inside the ear, but they also travel. They can end up on the tip of your cat's tail if he curls his tail around him when he sleeps. If your cat is aggressively biting the tip of his tail, ear mites might be why. Ear mites can crawl out of the ear and move on to the head or the face of the cat. Ear mites are also contagious among animals. If one cat has ear mites, it is a sure bet that all the rest of the pets in the home are infested.

When an ear mite lands in a cat's ear canal, it will live inside the canal devouring ear wax and oil and loose tissue. The mites have three stages of life...larvae, nymphs, adult. This life cycle only lasts for a period of three weeks.

Ear mites can drive cats crazy. When cats are infested with ear mites, they will shake their head violently, and scratch their ears. If the invasion is severe, they may also rub the side of their head along the carpet, furniture or floor. In advance stages, ear mite infections give off a distinct odor.

Treatment of ear mites

Over-the-counter products for ear mite prevention should be avoided at all costs. Generally, though they may kill the adult mites, they don't affect the eggs and the larvae. There are injectables, topical and oral meds available that will work against the ear mites. Most acquired through a vet (or can be purchased on line) for the proper treatment.

Before any treatment is given, it is important to clean the ears out of the sediment that has already collected there. **Use cotton balls, not Q-Tips (Q-Tips have the capability of pushing the crud deeper into the ear canal).** Keeping the cotton ball moistened with warmed mineral oil will help clean out the ears. Treatment of ear mites is a repeatable treatment **unless** a one-time ear mite medicine is used.

Revolution: Revolution flea treatment by Pfizer is effective against fleas, ear mites, heartworm, ticks, roundworms and hookworms. Follow the package directions carefully when applying this product.

Ivomec 1% - This is NOT to be confused with the Ivomectrin paste available over-the-counter for livestock. Ivomec solution is available at your vets. Over-medicating with Ivomec can place your cat into toxic shock.

Ivermectin is an injectable solution used for ear mite invasion. According to Dr. Susan Little DVM, DAVBP of Bytown Cat Hospital, Ivermectin can be used both orally and topically. The dosage for an adult cat is .1 mL (1/10 of 1 mL), this is a very tiny amount.

There are other prescription ear mite treatments that are effective available through your vet.

