

## **EAR SWAB EXAMINATION IN DOGS**

Niles Animal Hospital and Bird Medical Center  
7278 N. Milwaukee Ave. Niles, IL 60714  
(847)-647-9325 FAX (847)-647-8498  
[www.nilesanimalhospital.com](http://www.nilesanimalhospital.com)

### **WHAT IS AN EAR SWAB EXAMINATION?**

An ear swab examination is a test used to determine the cause of abnormal ear discharge. Bacteria and/or yeast organisms or mites are common findings with ear infections. The result of the examination can help determine drug choice. Culture and sensitivity can also be performed on an ear swab sample to determine which bacteria are causing the infection and the best choice of antibiotic treatment. An ear swab examination is indicated anytime there is ear discharge, signs of inflammation or itchiness of the ears.

There are no real contraindications to performing this test in an animal with ear inflammation, discharge or itchiness.

### **WHAT DOES AN EAR SWAB EXAMINATION REVEAL?**

An ear swab examination reveals the presence of bacteria, fungi and parasites. Determining the underlying cause of ear discharge, pain or itchiness can help determine appropriate treatment.

### **How Is an Ear Swab Examination Done?**

To perform an ear swab examination, a cotton tip applicator is placed within the ear canal. With a gentle movement, some discharge or debris is captured on the swab. This discharge is then smeared on a glass slide, stained and examined under a microscope. Results are usually available within 1 to 2 hours. Sometimes, the sample is submitted to an outside laboratory for evaluation. Some test results may not be available for up to 2 to 4 days.

### **IS AN EAR SWAB EXAMINATION PAINFUL?**

Usually, obtaining an ear swab sample is not painful but can cause some discomfort. For some animals, severe ear disease may be present and placing a swab in the highly inflamed, tender canal can be quite painful.

### **IS SEDATION OR ANESTHESIA NEEDED FOR AN EAR SWAB EXAMINATION?**

Neither sedation nor anesthesia is needed in most patients; however, sometimes ear disease is so significant that obtaining an ear swab sample can be quite painful. In these situations, tranquilization or ultra short anesthesia may be needed.