

I wish I'd known: Otoscopic Examination

- Otoscopic examination can be painful, being careful and gentle is important. It is also helpful to warn the owner.
- Exudate from an ear examination can accumulate within the lumen of the speculum so just cleaning the outside of the speculum is not sufficient. Practices may use speculum cleaners which are filled with disinfectant and contain brushes which remove the debris.
- If the speculum is kept in cleaner fluid, it must be washed to ensure no harmful chemicals are introduced to the ear canal.
- Start with the healthy ear to prevent spreading infection from one ear to the other; it is also non-painful and easier to examine.
- When examining the ear canal it may be easier with small dog breeds such as terriers to place the dog on a table; larger breeds may be easier to examine on the floor.
- When examining the ear gentle restraint should be provided by an assistant e.g. a nurse or the owner. The assistant stands on one side of the dog and places one hand behind the head to prevent the dog moving its head backwards and their other hand is cupped under the muzzle. The vet stands on the other side of the dog and examines the ear canal. To examine the other ear it is best if the assistant and vet to swap sides.
- If the ear is very painful or the patient is difficult to examine, it may be preferable to perform the examination under sedation.
- It may be helpful to gently lift the pinna upwards - this will increase the angle of the vertical and horizontal parts of the canal (i.e. opens up the angle between the parts) so that it is easier to slide the speculum down the ear canal.
- When looking along the horizontal canal the speculum must be horizontal i.e. at the same angle as the canal.