



LISTEN TO THIS

Ear care is an important part of dog grooming and health maintenance.

BY MAGGIE MARTON

Maggie Marton is a freelance writer and pet lifestyle pro. She lives in Bloomington, Indiana, with her husband, three dogs and a cat.

Ear cleaning seems simple enough, but it's a deceptively complicated task because of the length of a dog's ear canal. Because of that, and combined with canines having lots of hair or floppy ears, dogs are rendered susceptible to ear infections without proper care.

Most vets recommend a professional cleaning—either at the veterinarian or by a professional groomer. At Scenthound, a salon with several locations across Florida, ear care is a key part of its service offering.

"Our signature service, The B.E.N.T. (Bath, Ears, Nails, Teeth), includes a coat conditioning bath, ear cleaning, nail clipping and teeth brushing," said Darlene O'Donnell, Scenthound's operations manager. "We developed the package to address the core areas that require routine care. At Scenthound, it's our mission to help keep pups clean and healthy. It just takes a little regular maintenance to stay on top of most issues.

"Ear issues, and specifically ear infections, are one of the top reasons that dogs visit the vet," she continued. "Keeping ears free of hair and wax is a great start in maintaining healthy ears. Because of the twisty shape of a dog's ear canal, bacteria and yeast can work its way down, and if left unattended, can cause infection. The best plan of action is always prevention, especially if you have a dog who is prone to allergies which can exacerbate the problem. Pups with dropped or pendulous ears can also be more prone to infections and may require a little more attention."

It's All in the Tool

When it comes to cleaning up the hair, the Pulse Ion Cordless Clipper, manufactured by Andis Company, is an adjustable blade clipper that offers the dependability of a corded clipper. Best for medium-coated and wire hair breeds, the Pulse Ion offers professionals five different blade lengths (numbers 40, 30, 15, 10 and 9) to save time

when grooming. With a lightweight, ergonomic design and lithium ion battery for up to two hours of non-stop grooming, this tool is the ideal choice for controlled-cutting in sensitive areas.

Andis' education manager, Megan Mouser, recommends shears, like the Ball Tip Shears, when trimming around the ear. When trimming inside the ear, she recommends using an adjustable blade clipper on a 30 or 15 setting. A 5-in-1 clipper, like the Pulse Ion, is a quiet, lightweight, and versatile tool with the blade lengths needed for upkeep. All are available from Andis.

"Take caution around the ear folds when trimming," Mouser said, reminding the pros and the at-home groomers. "Remember that the clipper will make noise and vibrate, so many dogs will try and shake their head."

When it comes to tools and products used at the Scenthound locations, O'Donnell said members of the retail

team are very cautious when making their selections.

"At Scenthound, we take a lot of care in selecting the products we use and recommend to our customers," she said.

"It's important to us that our products are non-toxic and, of course, that they do the job well. Our shampoos are eco-friendly, chemical-free and use only natural ingredients.

"We use a non-toxic ear cleanser as well, called Zymox," she continued. "The formula uses natural, bio-active antimicrobial properties for gentle cleansing, and breaks through tough wax and debris without harsh chemicals that can irritate sensitive ears. If needed, we also remove ear hair to allow for more air circulation. We use a numbing ear powder and hemostats to extract hair from pup's ear as comfortably as possible."

Keep it Clean

Ear infections are something O'Donnell's groomers look for.

"If we spot an ear infection, we recommend Zymox Ear

Solution," she said. "The non-invasive protocol is an antibiotic-free solution and, in our experience, proves highly effective in minimizing bacterial, fungal and yeast infections."

"Pet parents know how difficult it can be to clean a dog's ears and how much dogs dislike the process, particularly the ear flooding part," said Elyse Horvath, owner of Natural Paws, regarding the brand's EARoma thEARapy. "With this product, it's much easier to clean a pet's ears, and there is minimal moisture left behind to dry out, which greatly lessens the chance of developing an infection."

As far as product innovation, the ear segment has seen a shift toward the more natural, as in other categories. According to O'Donnell, the organization is happy with what's on the market.

"We've tried countless products over the years, and we're pleased with what's available in the area of ear care," she said. "I love how many companies are taking a more natural, non-toxic path with their ingredients. Our mantra at Scenthound is to treat every pup as if it were our own, and to us, that means using only the safest, most effective products when it comes to our furry friends."

While dog owners who book routine appointments get the benefit of regular ear care to stave off potential infections, groomers should encourage owners to perform basic, routine maintenance tasks at home. Educate your clients, and provide them with the opportunity to purchase your most-recommended products to round out your service offering and create an additional sales opportunity. PA

