

Total Ear Canal Ablation (TECA)

The Theory

A TECA (total ear canal ablation) operation is performed in dogs and less frequently in cats to treat chronic and severe ear infections or other conditions that affect the ear canal. Here are some common reasons why a TECA operation might be necessary:

- **Chronic Otitis Externa:** This is a persistent inflammation of the external ear canal, often caused by bacterial or yeast infections. If left untreated or inadequately managed, it can lead to complications like narrowing of the ear canal, calcification of tissues and damage to the middle or inner ear. This can result in end-stage ear disease where the ear canal is severely compromised and a TECA is the only viable option.
- **Polyps or Tumors:** Benign growths, polyps, or tumors can develop in the ear canal. These can obstruct airflow and contribute to recurrent infections.
- **Severe Trauma:** In cases of severe trauma to the ear canal or surrounding structures, especially if the damage is extensive, a TECA may be performed to alleviate pain and prevent further complications.
- **Chronic Pain and Discomfort:** If a dog is experiencing chronic pain, discomfort, or severe itchiness due to a diseased or damaged ear canal, a TECA may be recommended to improve the dog's quality of life.

Pain Management:

TECA is a painful procedure and your pet will be prescribed medication to ensure that he/she is comfortable. Please follow the instructions for administration carefully.

Antibiotics:

Antibiotics may also be prescribed to prevent or treat any potential infections in the surgical area.

Wound care:

Monitor the surgical site for any signs of infection, excessive swelling, or discharge. The wound does not need to be bathed unless any discharge accumulates. Please ensure your pet wears an E-collar to prevent them from scratching the surgical site which could lead to infection or delayed healing.

Follow-Up Visits

Please schedule follow-up checks with your vet and 3 and 10 days post surgery.

- **Middle Ear Disease (Otitis Media):** Medical management of middle ear disease is often unrewarding and a TECA procedure is necessary.

The Surgery

It's important to note that a TECA operation is a major surgery and while it can greatly improve a dog's quality of life in cases of severe ear disease, it is typically considered a last resort when other treatment options have failed. During a TECA operation the entire external ear canal is removed. This involves carefully dissecting the external ear canal cartilage from the surrounding tissues. In some cases when the middle ear is involved in the disease process, part of the bony tympanic bulla is removed to allow access to the middle ear. This is known as a lateral bulla osteotomy (LBO). The ear flap (pinna) is not usually removed but the ear carriage may change.

After the procedure the muscles and skin are closed.

While this surgery can be highly effective in relieving pain and improving the dog's quality of life, it does result in permanent hearing loss on the affected side.

Post operative care

After the surgery, please ensure that you follow the post-operative instructions to ensure your pet has the best outcome.

Activity restriction:

Your pet can be allowed short gentle walks using a harness rather than a collar during the healing period. If you have other pets please restrict them from playing together.

Eating and Drinking:

Encourage your dog to eat and drink and offer soft, palatable food if necessary.

Possible Complications

Keep an eye out for any unusual behavior, signs of distress, or changes in the surgical site. Infection at the surgical site is a risk in any procedure and is slightly higher with ear surgery due to the nature of the surgical site. Facial nerve paralysis can be present after the surgery which results in a loss of blink in the eye of the operated side. In most cases this is temporary and will resolve within 6 weeks. It may be necessary to prescribe your pet eye drops to lubricate the eye during this time. Development of a draining sinus may occur many months following the surgery which occurs if a small piece of the lining of the ear remains. If you notice anything concerning, contact your veterinarian promptly.