

TOTAL EAR CANAL ABLATION (TECA) SURGERY IN DOGS AND CATS



Total Ear Canal Ablation (TECA) is a surgical procedure to remove the entire external ear canal. It is typically performed in dogs or cats with **chronic, painful, or non-responsive ear infections**, severe ear canal thickening, or tumors blocking the ear canal.

During this surgery, your pet's **vertical and horizontal ear canals** are completely removed. The **middle ear (bulla)** is also cleaned out in a procedure called a **bulla osteotomy**.

The **ear flap (pinna)** remains in place, although it may droop slightly post-op depending on the breed.

Why Is TECA Recommended?

TECA is often the best or only option for pets with:

- Recurrent or chronic **otitis externa** (ear canal inflammation)
- Calcified or **completely closed ear canals**
- **Tumors** or polyps in the ear canal
- **Middle ear infections** (otitis media)
- Pain, hearing loss, or head-shy behaviour related to ear disease

This surgery offers **long-term relief from pain and infection** when medical treatment no longer works.

Expected Benefits

- Elimination of chronic ear infections
- Relief from pain, inflammation, and discharge
- Improved quality of life
- Minimal or no further need for ear medications

Note: Hearing is often already reduced in affected ears prior to surgery, and most owners notice little difference after surgery.

Risks and Complications

As with any major surgery, there are some potential risks:

- **Facial nerve injury:** Temporary or permanent drooping of the eyelid or lip on the surgery side (seen in 25–50% of cases, permanent in 10–15%)
- **Head tilt** or mild balance issues (especially if the inner ear is affected)
- **Wound infection or drainage**
- **Persistent discharge** from retained secretory tissue in rare cases

All surgical steps are taken to minimize these risks, and your vet will discuss these with you in detail prior to surgery.

Aftercare Instructions

Home Care

- Your pet may go home the same day or remain hospitalized for 1–3 days depending on recovery.
- A **plastic cone (E-collar)** is essential to prevent scratching at the surgical site.
- **Pain relief medications** and **antibiotics** (if prescribed) must be given exactly as directed.
- **Eye drops** may be needed if facial nerve weakness affects blinking.
- Keep the incision **dry and clean**. Do not bathe your pet or allow swimming until advised.

Wound Monitoring

- Mild swelling or bruising is normal for the first few days.
- Contact the clinic if you notice:
 - Redness, heat, or swelling increasing after 3 days
 - Discharge or bleeding from the surgical site
 - Signs of discomfort despite medication
 - New neurological signs (head tilt, unsteady walking)

Activity

- Restrict vigorous activity for **10–14 days**
- No off-lead walks, rough play, or stairs if balance is affected

Follow-Up

- Sutures (if present) are typically removed **10–14 days** post-surgery
- A recheck appointment will assess healing and discuss long-term care

Prognosis

- TECA surgery is **highly successful**, with **90–95% of pets** experiencing resolution of chronic ear pain and infections
- Long-term improvement depends on **controlling underlying causes**, such as **allergies** or **hormonal disease**
- Most pets experience a **significant boost in quality of life** and comfort following full recovery

When to Call Us

Please contact the clinic if your pet:

- Is not eating, drinking, or seems lethargic after 24 hours
- Develops discharge, swelling, or pain at the surgical site
- Shows signs of facial nerve issues (e.g., can't blink, droopy mouth)
- Has trouble walking or seems unbalanced

If you have questions at any stage, we are here to support you and your pet's recovery.

Thank you for entrusting us with their care!

