WHAT ARE EAR MITES?
Ear mites are tiny, highly contagious parasites that live in cats’ external ear canals and cause itching, irritation and sometimes secondary infections. Detect them early to prevent them from spreading among cats.

SYMPTOMS
- Dry, black ear discharge that resembles coffee grounds
- Small wounds or lesions near the base of ears from excessive scratching
- Scratching at ears
- Head shaking
- Irritation and inflammation in ears

TREATMENT

1. GET STARTED:
Accumulated debris can prevent topical medications from penetrating and killing mites. Gather a towel, a bowl of warm water, cotton balls, paper towels and a commercially available, cerumenolytic cleaner that’s specially designed to dissolve thick, waxy discharge.

2. CLEAN THE EAR: Burrito-wrap the cat in the towel. Soak a cotton ball with the cleaner, place it in the ear and massage the area to disperse the cleaner. Allow the cat to shake her head, then wipe out the ear with a paper towel, going only as far into the ear canal as your finger will fit without force. Do not use Q-tips or a bulb syringe, and avoid the ear drum.

3. KILL THE MITES:
Many over-the-counter topical ear drops contain insecticides that kill mites, but not their eggs. Repeated doses over three to four weeks are usually required to clear an infection.

4. SOOTHE THE EAR: Clean the ears again several days after each treatment. A veterinarian can also provide a one-time application of a topical steroid to ease inflammation and itching.

5. TREAT ALL CATS IN YOUR CARE:
Except in the case of very young kittens, treat all cats and kittens with a topical such as Revolution that kills fleas, ear mites and some intestinal worms to prevent spreading.

AFTER TREATMENT, you’ll likely see improvement within a few days, and the prognosis is excellent. If discharge re-accumulates after cleaning and treatment, or if the ears become painful or have a foul smell, have a veterinarian examine the cat to determine next steps.

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