

What did you say?

Understanding hearing loss

Dogs suffering from hearing loss can still live happy lives. Learn more about hearing loss and how you can help your hard-of-hearing pup.

What should I know?

Hearing loss is a common complaint from dog owners, especially as dogs grow older. The most common cause is an age related change called otosclerosis. This process makes the tiny components of the inner ear less pliable and unable to function as they should. Because the precise function of the ear is to transmit sound waves, the suppleness of the inner structures is critical to function.

A dog that has suffered from chronic recurrent otitis (inflammation of the ear) is even more likely to suffer from brittleness of these tiny structures because of scar tissue and swelling. Other causes that can impact hearing can include ototoxicity (adverse effects to the ear from certain drugs) and effects from loud noises.



What should I do?

If you think that your dog suffers from hearing loss, ask your veterinarian to make sure that there is no infection or other concern present. Your vet may suggest seeing a veterinary neurologist like Dr. Shull to be sure of the cause. Both Canine Cognitive Dysfunction and Otosclerosis are common in aging pets and can occur in tandem. Each issue needs to be addressed to improve quality of life.

There are things you can do to make a hearing impaired dog's life easier.

- **Teach her visual cues so that the impact of the hearing deficit is minimized in daily life.**

Senior dogs can learn to respond to hand signals for rewards. Time spent teaching the new cues is a great investment in your relationship.

- **Investigate vibration collars designed for this purpose to rouse and interest your dog the way sounds used to.** Hearing loss can make the rituals enjoyed by both you and your dog (like greetings) different and impact your bond. Vibration collars are remote controlled and you can train your dog that the vibration means you are home, so he can meet you at the door.

- **Teach your dog appropriate responses to the cues so that he feels secure even without his hearing.** Dogs love consistency and knowing the response you want, makes for a calm and confident dog.

Hearing loss doesn't mean your dog can't lead a full and happy life, but you should be mindful of your dog's new challenges and ask your veterinarian about any concerns you have with your hard-of-hearing pup.