Complications and Treatment of Otitis Externa (Overview)

http://www.doghealth.com/ears-and-eyes/otitis-externa-in-dogs

When ear infection continues over weeks and months, numerous complications can arise. Some are irreversible. They include:

1. **Chronic changes**  
   Years of infection and inflammation take their toll. Scarring and swelling causes the ear canals to close down, trapping fluid and debris worse than before. In time, the ear canals can literally solidify with hard-as-bone scar tissue. Major corrective surgery is often the only recourse at this point.
2. **Ear Hematoma**  
   Violent head-shaking from an intensely itchy case of otitis externa can actually injure the ear flap, breaking blood vessels below the skin surface. The result is an ear hematoma, or “pillow ear.” Ear hematoma is not painful, but should be treated promptly to reduce the chance of a disfigured ear flap. Treatment is surgical, and involves draining the fluid from the hematoma and using special sutures to tack the earflap flat again. Also strive to identify and treat the itch-inducing ear problem, lest the hematoma recur.
3. **Middle & inner ear infection**  
   The external ear canal is separated from the middle ear cavity and inner ear (cochlea) by a thin fibrous membrane – the ear drum. Severe or ongoing otitis externa can actually rupture the eardrum. Once the eardrum is breached, it’s not long before yeast and bacteria set up shop in the area of the middle and inner ear. Symptoms of middle and inner ear may include the following:
   * Dizziness
   * Tilting of the head to one side
   * Circling
   * Poor balance
   * Uneven pupils
   * Strange rhythmic eye movements
   * Pain on opening the mouth
   * Loss of hearing