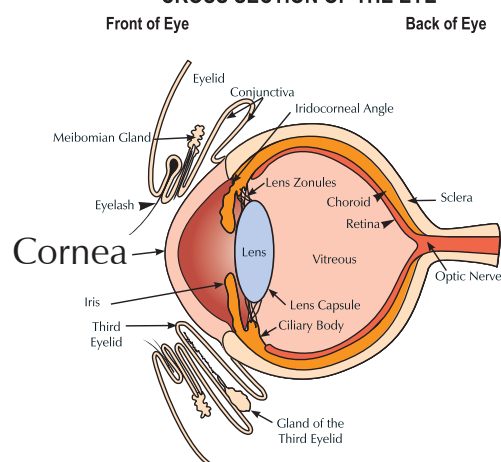


Corneal Diseases in Dogs & Cats

Corneal Ulcers

A corneal ulcer is a defect or abrasion of the clear outer part of the eye. Ulcers may be shallow or deep.

CROSS SECTION OF THE EYE



As this is a painful condition, the clinical signs are those associated with pain in the eyes, such as tearing, rubbing or pawing at the eye, redness in the eye, and excessive squinting.

Ulcers are usually caused by trauma to the cornea such as in a fight with another animal, a foreign body in the eye such as a grass seed, or an abnormality of the eyelids.

Causes of Corneal Ulcers

Abnormalities of the eyelids which can cause ulcers include: rolling in of the eyelids (*entropion*) where hair rubs on the cornea, extra eyelashes (*distichiae* or *ectopic cilia*), or inadequate tear production (*dry eye*). In cats viral infections (*Herpes*) can cause ulceration of the cornea.



Corneal Ulcer

Treatment

Treatment for corneal ulcers involves recognising the primary problem where possible, and then controlling associated infection and pain. Most of the time we can do this with medication, including drops or ointments into the eye after correcting the underlying problem.

In some cases however, the ulcer may be so severe that surgery is needed to not only save vision but to save the eye. In the worst cases the eye may rupture, resulting in the need for major corneal surgery. As with most eye diseases, the earlier an eye specialist can start treatment the better the chances of success in saving the eye and vision.



Corneal Dystrophy / Degenerations



Rapidly progressing ulcer

Corneal dystrophy is a disease characterised by cloudy deposits within the cornea. The deposits are a combination of calcium and fats (*cholesterol*) within the superficial and deep layers of the cornea.

These may occur in one or both eyes, and often have no obvious cause, although may be associated with some diseases such as hypothyroidism. They are usually not painful, and do not interfere with vision. Certain breeds may be predisposed such as *Beagles, Collies, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels,*

and Huskies. In older animals, corneal degeneration may result in similar deposits. Occasionally an ulcer may develop on the surface of the deposits which is then painful. In these cases it may be necessary to remove the deposits by surgery. These older animals can also have slow corneal healing after surgery.

Indolent Ulcers



Some cases of long term non healing ulcers (*indolent ulcers*) can be due to a failure of the superficial cells of the cornea to adhere to the

underlying layers. Ordinarily the surface cells of the cornea are held to the underlying tissue by “anchors”. Indolent ulcers are caused by these anchors not working very well, or even not being there.

Breeds such as *Boxers, Corgis, diabetics and older animals* are predisposed to this condition. These can take a very long time to heal (*months*), and usually require surgery to help healing. The surgery performed may include removing all the unhealthy superficial cells, and scraping the cornea with a needle to allow grooves for the superficial cells to adhere to. Sometimes indolent ulcers can occur in the other eye too. After surgery, there is usually a slight scar left.

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