

# Dry Eye in Animals (KCS)

## What is Dry Eye (KCS) and what causes it?

Dry Eye is a condition in which the tear glands are unable to provide adequate moisture to the eye. This disease also affects humans.



*Chronic dry eye*

Dry Eye can be caused by trauma, drug reactions and systemic diseases. The vast majority of cases are caused by the body's own immune system (auto-immune disease). Some breeds of dog seem to be especially predisposed to the disease such as *Bull Terriers, Cocker Spaniels, English Bull dogs, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Lhasa Apsos, Shih Tzus and West Highland White Terriers.*

## What are the clinical signs of KCS?

The clinical signs of dry eye include squinting, copious amounts of thick discharge from one or both eyes (often both are affected), redness, cloudiness in the eyes, and loss of vision. Long term the eyes can go a black colour.

## What treatments are available?

Treatment for dry eye may be either medical or surgical. Fortunately most animals respond well to medical therapy. This involves eye drops or ointment designed to stimulate the tear gland to

produce more tears. Medication for this condition will usually be lifelong.

Cyclosporine is the drug that is usually used to achieve this. Cyclosporine may come as a drop or ointment (*Optimmune*). As well as cyclosporine we may use other medications to help clear



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up the infections and discharge such as antibiotics, and corticosteroids.

Cleaning the eye with a warm compress to soak away the crusts is also very important in controlling the disease as the discharge promotes bacterial growth. In some breeds where eyelid closure is poor, we may use eye ointments to lubricate the cornea. If your pet requires oral antibiotics for other problems, sulphur based medications should not be used as they can further decrease tear production.

Surgical treatment for dry eye is occasionally needed in cases where there is no response to medication. The surgery involves moving a salivary gland duct from the mouth to the eye. This results in saliva moistening the eye.



The surgery is usually successful, but complications can occur. These may include mineral deposits being formed on the cornea, excessive facial wetting, or blockage of the transplanted duct. These may require further surgery.