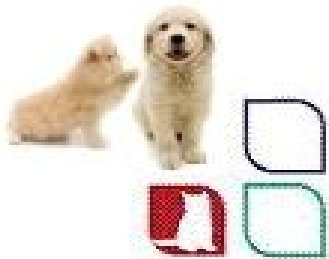


CORNEAL ULCERS



If you have any further queries regarding the welfare of your pet, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff

We are happy to assist!

What is a corneal ulcer?

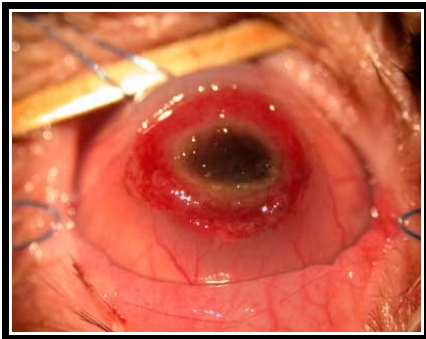
The cornea is the transparent, shiny membrane which makes up the front of the eyeball. The cornea is comprised of three layers. Because all of these layers of the cornea are clear, it is not possible to see them without special stains which colour particular cells and highlight them when looked at with a ophthalmoscope.

An erosion of few of these layers is called a corneal erosion or a corneal abrasion. A corneal ulcer is an erosion through two of the layers. If the erosion goes through If the third layer ruptures, the liquid inside the eyeball leaks out, the eye collapses and irreparable damage can occur.

How does a corneal ulcer occur?

There are several causes for corneal ulcers in dogs. The most common is trauma. An ulcer may result from blunt trauma, such as a dog rubbing its eye on the carpet, or due to a laceration, such as a cat scratch. The second most common cause is chemical burn of the cornea. This may happen when irritating shampoo gets in the eye.

Less common causes of corneal ulcers include bacterial infections, viral infections, and other diseases. These may originate in the eye or develop secondary to disease elsewhere in the body.



How does a corneal ulcer affect my dog?

A corneal ulcer is very painful. In response to pain, most dogs rub the affected eye with a foot or on the carpet. To protect the eye, they keep the lids tightly closed. Occasionally, there will be a discharge that collects in the corner of the eye or runs down the face.

How is a corneal ulcer diagnosed?

Superficial corneal abrasions are usually not visible. They can be visualised with the use of special stains. A drop of this stain is placed on the cornea. The dye will stick to an area of ulceration and is easily visualised especially with special lights. This is the most basic test performed and may be the only test needed if the ulcer is acute and very superficial.

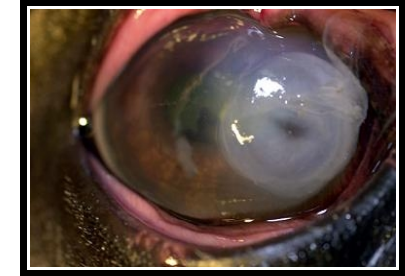
How is a corneal ulcer treated?

Treatment depends on the severity of the condition. Corneal abrasions generally heal within 3-5 days. Medication is used to prevent bacterial infections and to relieve spasm and pain. If a corneal ulcer is present, measures must be taken to protect the eye and to promote healing. Since dogs do not wear eye patches well, surgical techniques are often used to close the eyelids and cover the ulcer. These measures protect the eye for several days, then are reversed so the dog can use the eye again.

Ulcers that do not heal well often have an accumulation of dead cells at the ulcer edge. These dead cells prevent normal cells from the corneal surface from sliding over the ulcer edge and filling in the defect to heal it. If this appears to be part of the healing problem, the dead cells are removed from the edges of the ulcer before the eyelids are surgically closed. In some cases, removing the dead cells may be all that is needed to start the healing process, so surgical closing of the eyelids may not be necessary.

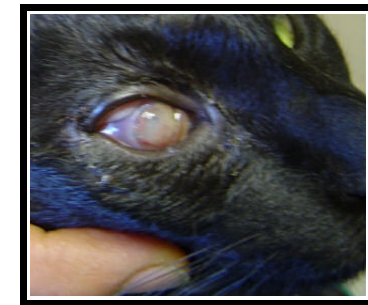
Are there any side-effects from the eye medications?

Occasionally a dog will be allergic to an antibiotic that is instilled in the eye. If your dog seems more painful after the medication is used, discontinue it and contact the veterinary surgeon immediately. A corneal ulcer is extremely painful for the dog so the eye is kept tightly shut.



How do I know when to discontinue medication?

The best way to tell that the cornea has healed is to repeat the fluorescein stain test. This will probably be carried out by your veterinary surgeon after 5-7 days of treatment.



If you have any queries or would like to know please contact us, we would be happy to help.