

## EYE PROBLEMS

CATARACTS are a cloudiness in the normally clear lens of the eye. This is different than the hazy appearance that all dogs get after 8 years of age, a normal change called sclerosis. This is simply the lens of the eye getting more dense and does not affect vision. But cataracts are different: a dog can be born with them or can develop them as a puppy or adult as a result of genetics, poor nutrition or as a side effect of diabetes. In some dogs cataracts develop rapidly, while in others the process is slow. Unlike in humans where cataract surgery is done routinely, it is more difficult in dogs and only recommended with severely compromised vision or full blindness in both eyes.

CHERRY EYE appears as a bright red lump in the corner of the eye. It is the exposed gland of the third eyelid that all dogs have at the corner of their eyes to keep them moist and clean. Cherry Eye is an infected tear gland it is as painful as it is unsightly. It can potentially be irritating enough to cause blindness and may require surgery. The condition is usually seen in young, small breed dogs.

CONJUNCTIVITIS is a common problem in which the membrane of the eye gets irritated and it produces mucus to soothe the cornea and fight the bacteria.

DRY EYE is a disease mainly of older dogs that is caused by inadequate tear production. Treatment is directed at increasing tear production. Unless it is treated in early stages, it can lead to serious infection and corneal ulcers.

GLAUCOMA is the same in dogs as in humans, a disease in which pressure builds up inside the eye, which can lead to blindness. The eye may appear cloudy and red, due to the fluid normally circulating in the eye which does not drain properly. It is usually seen in middle-aged dogs, especially Cocker Spaniels and terriers. It can be

painful and you may be aware that your dog squints in bright light. Another symptom is that the eye may bulge and if the glaucoma becomes advanced the eyelid may not even be able to cover it. If the glaucoma goes untreated to this emergency stage it can cause blindness in a matter of hours.

TEAR STAINS (also called “Poodle eye”) is a condition is peculiar to certain toy breeds like Poodles, Maltese, Pekingese and Pomeranians. The cause is usually unknown but creates streaks down the face from the corners of the eyes. Vets will often give a broad spectrum antibiotic for about three weeks or in a low dose to put in the food for long-term control. The antibiotic is secreted in the tears and stops them from staining. Like with all medical issues, you obviously need to speak to your own vet about the advisability of this treatment.