

EYE INJURIES

The cornea is the transparent front covering of the eyeball. It is the most sensitive part of the body and readily reacts to irritants both inside and outside the eye. Trauma, allergic reactions, infection, chemicals, and extra lashes rubbing on the eye can all cause injuries to the cornea. Scratches or abrasions to the cornea (corneal ulcers) are common in both cats and dogs. Because corneal deterioration can progress rapidly after injury, it is important to have eye injuries examined as soon as possible. Untreated corneal injuries can lead to permanent vision problems or blindness.

Corneal injuries usually result in pain, redness, squinting, and discharge from the eye. Affected pets may try to rub the eye. Some large corneal ulcers are easily visible on the surface of the eye. Smaller scratches or ulcers may not be visible unless a special stain (fluorescein) is placed on the eye. In some instances, special tests to check tear function or ocular pressures are needed to determine the cause of the problem.

Treatment for corneal injuries usually involves antibiotic eye drops or ointment. It is important that the medication be given as directed. If you are unsure how to best administer the medication, don't hesitate to ask one of the doctors or technicians to show you how. It often helps to warm the medication to close to body temperature by holding the container in your hand for a few minutes before administering it to your pet (animals don't like cold drops in their eyes any more than you would!) Always give your pet extra praise and/or a treat after administering the medication. You should not allow your pet to rub at the eye, since this may lead to further corneal damage. Some animals will need an Elizabethan collar when unsupervised to prevent them from rubbing the eye. Because corneal injuries are very painful, your pet will either be given injectable medication for pain control or you will be sent home with oral analgesic medication to give.

Most corneal injuries heal rapidly and completely following treatment. In some cases, a recheck visit is needed to insure the injury has healed completely before medication is discontinued. If you cannot apply the medication as directed or your pet shows continued discomfort, please call the clinic as soon as possible.