

## 'Red Eye'

There are several reasons one or both of your pet's eyes may be red. The 'red eye' appearance is usually caused by inflammation of the conjunctiva (the thin membrane that covers the surface of the inner eyelid and the white part of the eyeball). Signs your pet's eye is painful include squinting, excess tear production or rubbing at the face.

The 'red eye' appearance may be due to conjunctivitis (inflammation of the conjunctiva) due to allergies (such as dust, pollens and other irritants) or be due to a corneal ulcer. If your pet has an uncomplicated conjunctivitis, this may quickly develop into corneal ulceration if he/she continues to rub at the eye, so it is important to seek veterinary attention as soon as you notice your pet's eye is abnormal, irritated or painful.

The cornea is the clear membrane forming the outer surface of the eyeball. A corneal ulcer is the result of disruption to this membrane. The disruption may occur due to trauma (self trauma as your pet rubs his own face; scratching by other animals- please note cat scratch injuries are especially serious as the wound often heals quickly sealing the infection within the eye), foreign bodies (grass seeds, bits of sticks) or chemical irritants (shampoos, medicines). It may also be due to an inability of your pet to produce adequate tears to lubricate the eye and provide protection.

Your veterinarian can perform tests immediately to determine whether your pet has adequate tear production and whether a corneal deficit is actually present. Usually you will be sent home with medication regardless of what these test results show, however the type of medication dispensed will depend entirely on these results. It is VITAL you do not use eye medications you have used previously on this or other pets or your own eye medication as all medications are different and some of the contents can be detrimental to certain eye conditions.

Topical medications will often need to be applied directly to the affected eye every few hours, at least initially. We will usually recommend your pet is re-evaluated by a veterinarian and the frequency of rechecks will be dependant on the severity of the condition. It is important that you do bring your pet in as requested because if complications develop with corneal ulcers, the eye deteriorates rapidly. In some cases the eye cannot be saved and needs to be removed. Fortunately, if you follow your veterinarian's advice, most ulcerations will heal with medical treatment. If the eye is not healing as expected, if the ulcer is particularly deep / irregular or there is concern regarding the healing potential at any stage in treatment, you may be advised surgery is required to facilitate healing. Surgery usually involves temporarily covering the eye with either the nictitating membrane (or third eyelid), or suturing the eyelids closed.

Pain relief is also often required and this may take one of several forms depending on the current state and underlying cause of your pet's condition. If your veterinarian recommends your pet have an Elizabethan Collar, it is very important you leave this on for the duration of treatment, even if becomes a nuisance bumping into things. You, your pet & your veterinarian will all be much happier with a few crashes with the collar on than with corneal ulceration complications.

Please contact the Animal Referral Hospital (02) 9758-8666 for more information about this or any other conditions - we are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for emergencies and critical patient care.