

Eye problems in cats - an overview

Overview

- Eyes problems should always be taken seriously to prevent loss of vision.
- If you notice a change in your cat's eyes, contact your vet for an appointment.
- If your cat is in pain, book an urgent appointment.

General information



There are many different conditions that can affect the eyes, including: injuries, infections, pressure changes, eyelid problems, and even an illness in another part of the body e.g. diabetes. Problems with the eyes can present themselves in many different ways. To prevent loss of vision, they should always be taken seriously, and dealt with quickly. This article gives an overview of the most common eye symptoms and conditions we see in cats.

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet as soon as you notice a problem with your cat's eyes. Leaving your cat without treatment could lead to much more serious problems or even loss of vision.

Find out whether you are eligible for free or low cost PDSA veterinary treatment using our checker below or visit www.pdsa.org.uk/eligibility

Symptoms

If your cat has a problem with either of his/her eyes, you may notice the following:

- Weeping/discharge
- Redness or swelling
- Cloudiness
- Pain/blinking/keeping one or both eye(s) closed
- Third eyelid showing
- A lump in or around the eye
- Loss of vision
- Blood in the eye
- Bulging eye
- A change in the size/shape of the pupil

Common eye conditions

- **Eye infections / conjunctivitis** - eye infections can be caused by bacteria or viruses. If your cat suffers from frequent eye infections, they might have an underlying condition such as cat flu.
- **Eye ulcers** - a wound on the surface of the eye (the cornea). Ulcers need treatment to help them heal and can lead to loss of an eye if neglected.
- **Eyelid problems** – such as eyelids that turn inwards and rub the eyeball (entropion).
- **Cataracts** – a clouding of the lens is called a cataract. They are much less common in cats than in dogs, but do sometimes

occur. Cataracts in cats are usually caused by another condition such as an injury, glaucoma, uveitis or lens luxation.

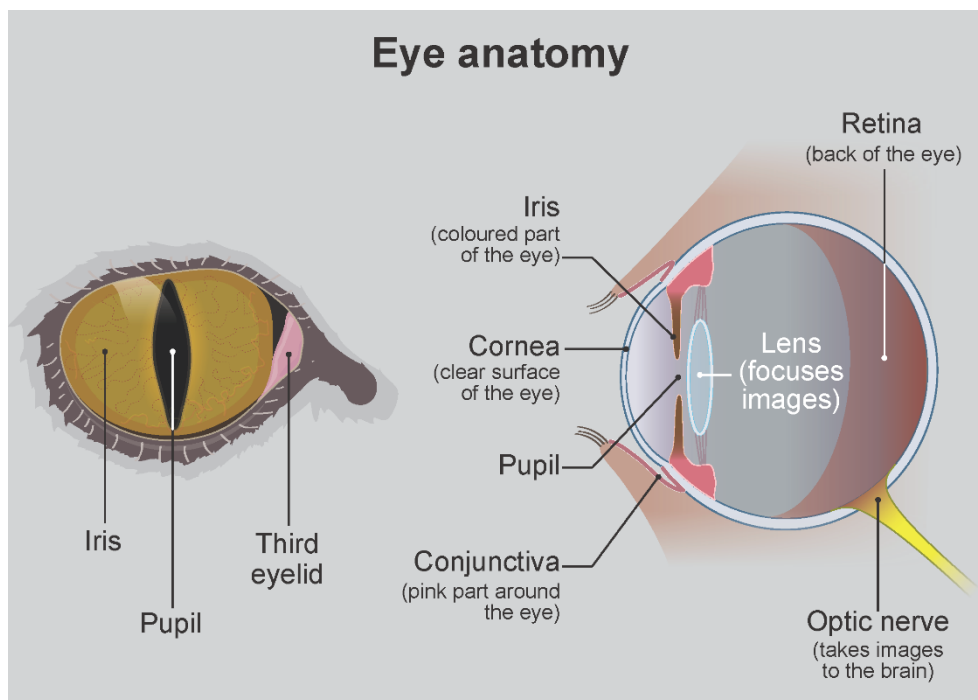
- **Retinal detachment** - retinal detachment is where the thin layer of cells (the retina), separates from the back of the eye causing loss of vision. Retinal detachment is often due to high blood pressure and is common in cats with hyperthyroidism and kidney disease.
- **Uveitis** – inflammation of the coloured part of the eye (the iris) and the structures around it.
- **Blindness** – many different eye problems can cause blindness. Fortunately, cats are better at adapting to blindness than humans, (perhaps because they compensate with their excellent sense of smell and hearing).
- **Masses and tumours** – growths can occur behind, in and around the eye. It's important to get any new lumps checked by your vet.
- **Lens luxation** – when the lens (see image below), comes out of position, often because of another underlying condition.
- **Glaucoma** – increased pressure inside the eye. Glaucoma is a painful condition that can quickly lead to blindness if left untreated.

Eye anatomy

See our image below explaining basic eye anatomy.

- **Eyelids** - cats have three eyelids; the upper lid, lower lid and a third eyelid in the inside corner of the eye, beneath the outer lids.
- **Conjunctiva** - the soft, pink tissues inside the eyelids and around the eyeball.
- **Cornea** – the clear, front surface of the eyeball.
- **Iris** - the coloured part of the eye.
- **Pupil** - the hole in the iris that lets light into the eye.

- **Lens** - the lens is a small, transparent disc inside the eyeball. It focuses images on the back of the eye.
- **Retina** - the back of the eye where a layer of light-sensitive cells receives images.
- **Optic nerve** - the nerve that transmits image signals to the brain, enabling sight.



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