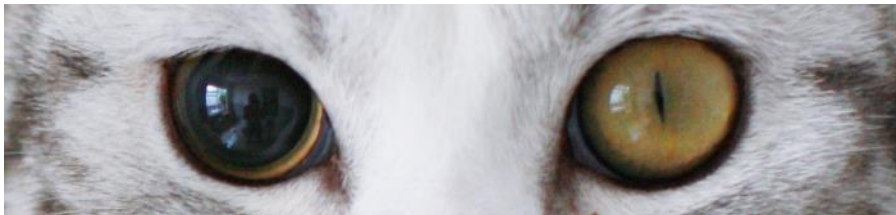


Blindness in cats

Overview

- Surprisingly, it's not always easy to tell if your cat is going blind.
- There are many possible causes – some cause sudden blindness, some cause gradual blindness, some are treatable, some are not.
- Book an appointment with your vet if you suspect your cat is losing their sight



This cat is blind in the eye with the dilated pupil (the darker of the two).

How can I tell if my cat is blind?

Signs to look out for include:

- A change in the appearance of their eye(s)
- Difficulty finding their way and trouble jumping up
- Not wanting to go out at night
- Bumping into things
- Hiding away and becoming nervous
- Getting lost outside
- Unable to find food/water or litter tray
- Walking slowly/cautiously
- Disorientation

Causes

Different parts of the eye can be affected causing vision loss in different ways. Possible causes of blindness include:

Serious eye injuries. Serious injuries to the eye can cause blindness. Similarly, scarring to the front of the eye can cause loss of vision.

Cataracts. Changes to the lens inside the eye(s); common in older cats and diabetics.

Glaucoma. Increased pressure inside the eye.

Uveitis. Inflammation inside the eye.

Retinal disease. Disease at the back of the eye such as retinal detachment (common in cats with kidney disease).

Optic nerve disease. A problem with the nerve that connects the brain to the eye.

Brain disease. Such as a bleed, stroke, tumour or infection.

General disease. Diseases in another part of the body can sometimes cause blindness e.g. Feline Leukaemia.

Tumours in the eye. Tumours in and around the eye can cause blindness.

Bleeding in the eye. Often due to high blood pressure (common in cats with kidney disease).

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet as soon as you notice your cat is having problems seeing. Some causes of blindness are reversible, and the sooner treatment is given the better the chance of regaining vision.

You know your cat best. Contact your vet if you're concerned.

Gradual vs sudden loss of vision

Blindness can develop suddenly or gradually, depending the cause.

Gradual loss of vision.

It can be surprisingly difficult to notice a gradual loss of vision because cats are good at adapting. You may notice behaviour changes – they might find it harder to see in dim light, bump into items lying around the house and lose confidence jumping. Cats that lose their vision gradually often adapt well and lead a happy life.

Sudden loss of vision.

If your cat has suddenly gone blind, the symptoms will be much more obvious. They are likely to seem stressed, stand still, walk very cautiously and bump into things. If your cat has suddenly lost their vision, it's important to consider their quality of life when deciding on a treatment plan with your vet. Sadly, it may be kinder to put your cat to sleep if they are struggling to cope.

Caring for a blind cat

Keep them safe

Your blind cat will need to stay indoors unless you are supervising them in the garden. Left to roam, your blind cat is at high risk of injury, perhaps being hit by a car, being attacked by another cat or dog or falling off something high.

Keep a lookout for anything in the garden that might be dangerous i.e. low hanging branches, thorns or uneven surfaces.

Keep your home the same

Don't make any sudden changes to the layout of your home. Your cat will learn to find their way around furniture and through doorways. They often do this so well it's as if they have their sight back! If you do need to make a change in your home, guide them around the new layout several times to help them learn new routes through the room. You can also leave a radio playing softly near where they sleep. The sound coming from the same place will help them to orientate themselves and 'map' the house.

Keep their food and water bowls in the same place

Keep your cat's food bowl, water bowls and litter trays in the same place. If you need to move their things, then guide them to their new location a few times to help them adjust.

Pet-proof your home

Take another look at your home and work out if there any hazards for your cat. Think about removing any furniture with sharp edges or pad the corners. Make sure wires and other trip hazards are tucked away, and ensure your pet can't accidentally bump into anything hot or dangerous, like a wood burning stove or fireplace.

Ring a bell

Try wearing a small bell or a rattle around the house, this 'jingle' will help your cat to know where you are at all times.

Try new toys

If your pet has lost interest in their old toys or is struggling to play the games they used to, make the most of their keen sense of hearing and smell. Balls with a bell inside and toys that you can fill with tasty treats are great for blind cats.

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