

Corneal Ulcers

Corneal ulcers are, simply put, damage to the surface of the eyeball. They can be caused by injuries, rolled-in eyelids (called Entropion), certain viruses, and dry eyes.

Corneal ulcers are usually painful for the animal and result in squinting, excessive tear production, pawing at the eye, or rubbing it against floors or furniture. Severe ulcers can lead to blindness, scarring, and rupture of the eyeball.

Diagnosis of the condition consists of taking a complete history including any possible injuries, a thorough examination of the eye, and a stain called fluorescein. This special stain only sticks to the inner layers of the cornea, causing the ulcer to glow with a greenish hue when applied.

Once a corneal ulcer is diagnosed, we will prescribe a special eyedrop mixture containing several different medications that help to heal the ulcer as quickly as possible and avoid infection of the eye. It is important to apply the eyedrop mixture three to four times per day, as this will speed healing and avoid complications as much as possible. We also typically send home an E-collar (“cone”) to avoid further damage to the eye from pawing or rubbing, and to ensure that the medication stays in the eye after application instead of being rubbed out. The E-collar should be left on at ALL times to promote healing and prevent further damage.

Depending on how deep and severe the ulcer is, healing may take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. Weekly rechecks with the veterinarian are essential so that we can monitor the size and depth of the ulcer as well as watch for signs of infection. If the ulcer is failing to heal with initial treatment, we may need to change our treatment plan or even refer to an animal ophthalmology specialist. Severe and non-healing ulcers may even require surgery.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the clinic at 319-837-6511. Thank you for bringing your pet to us for medical care!