



## *Condition: Keratoconjunctivitis sicca ('Dry Eye')*

### Ophthalmology Fact Sheet #1

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'Dry eye' is an eye disease commonly found in dogs. It occurs when insufficient tears (which are essential to keep the eye moist and healthy) are produced from the tear glands and is diagnosed by measuring tear production using a 'Schirmer Tear Test'. In most cases, both eyes are affected.

#### **Symptoms**

- Recurrent conjunctivitis
- A sticky grey/white/green discharge from one or both eyes
- Clouding or dullness of the surface of the eye (the cornea)
- Discomfort – the animal may blink more than normal or rub at its eyes

#### **Treatment**

The main aims of treatment for keratoconjunctivitis are to keep the eyes comfortable, free from infection and to preserve vision by increasing tear production or by giving artificial tears. Treatments will vary from case to case and depending on the suspected cause of the condition, with options usually including the following:

## Most cases of dry eye will need lifelong management



### Medication to stimulate tear production

In most cases, the first-line treatment is cyclosporine eye ointment (Optimmune™). Optimmune treats the underlying cause of dry eye (destruction of the tear glands by the body's immune system) and as such is the best treatment in mild to moderate cases. It's usually very effective, but it needs to be given twice daily every day, and lifelong treatment is usually required. If Optimmune is ineffective, we'll sometimes prescribe a stronger solution of cyclosporine (cyclosporine in corn oil). Alternatively, a different eye drop called tacrolimus may be effective instead.

### Artificial tears

These include drops, gels and ointments to keep the surface of the eye moist and prevent evaporation of tears. These don't treat the underlying cause, but instead help to replace the tears that are not being produced by the animal.

### Antibiotics

Corneal ulcers and bacterial infections occur quite commonly in dogs with dry eye, and so antibiotic eye drops may be prescribed from time to time.



### Surgery

Parotid Duct Transposition (PDT) can be performed should the medication mentioned above prove unsuccessful. The surgery involves moving a salivary duct from its usual opening into the mouth to inside the lower eyelid. Saliva is then secreted onto the surface of the eye and

acts to 'mimic' tears and keep the surface of the eye moist. It's important to note that, even after surgery, lifelong management may still be needed to keep the face clean and treat any complications that can occasionally be caused by saliva being present in the eye instead of tears.

### **In summary**

Whatever treatment is advised, management will usually be needed for the duration of the dog's life and regular visits to the ophthalmologist or your own vet will still be needed. During these visits, the health of the eye will be checked, tear production will be reassessed and any side effects of the treatment strategies will be monitored

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