

Cataracts

What is it?

A disruption of lens fibers causing an opacity in the lens of the eye that may or may not affect vision. Severity can range from stable, pinpoint opacities to diabetic cataracts that can cause rupture of the lens.



What causes it?

A genetic basis is suspected for most juvenile cataracts which are cataracts that develop under six years of age. Penetrating injury to the lens or nutritional deficiencies can also cause cataracts, but are not nearly as common. A common cause of cataracts is diabetes. The mechanism that causes cataracts in diabetic dogs is not completely understood.

Signs & Symptoms

Most small cataracts will go unnoticed by owners. The dog's vision is not affected or is minimally affected.

Diabetic cataracts cause blindness and are visible to owners. Many dogs don't run into anything unless they are in an unfamiliar area. Nuclear sclerosis is a benign, normal condition of the aging lens that is NOT a cataract. A cloudy cornea is not a cataract.

Prognosis:

Depends on the type of cataract. Diabetic dogs will always go blind from their cataracts.

Breeding implications/genetics:

A genetic basis is strongly suspected for most juvenile cataracts. Diabetic cataracts are only genetic to the extent that diabetes is genetic. Newfoundlands that are being bred should have a yearly eye exam as cataracts can develop at any time. Non-breeding dogs should still have an eye exam at a couple of points in their life to provide statistics on the incidence of ocular diseases in the breed.

More Information:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AY4Z0bMXDIU> (Ocular anatomy)

https://www.petmd.com/blogs/purelypuppy/lradosta/2012/aug/juvenile_cataracts_puppy-26754

Testing & Treatment

How is it diagnosed?

For small cataracts, by ophthalmic examination.

How is it treated?

For dogs with small, static cataracts, do nothing. Mature and hypermature cataract of any kind will require surgery to restore vision.

This information is not meant to be a substitute for veterinary care.

Always follow the instructions provided by your veterinarian.

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