



CATARACTS

What is a cataract?

Inside the eye is a lens that focuses light on the back of the eye or the retina. Vision occurs at the retina. This is similar to a camera which has a lens to focus light on the film. If the lens becomes opaque this is called a cataract.

What causes cataracts?

The most common cause of cataracts in the dog is inherited. Other causes include injuries to the eye or diseases such as diabetes mellitus (“sugar diabetes”). Some appear to occur spontaneously and are age related.

Are some breeds more prone than others?

Many breeds of dogs are affected with hereditary cataracts. Some of the recognized breeds include the American Cocker, Labrador, Poodle, Boston Terrier and the Welsh Springer Spaniel to mention a few.

Will my dog go blind?

If cataracts occupy less than 30% of the lens or only one lens is affected, they rarely cause diminished vision. When the opacity reaches about 60% of the total lens area, vision impairment is usually apparent. If the opacity progresses to 100% of the lens, the dog is then blind. However, whether the cataract remains static or progresses depends on the type of cataract, the breed and other risk factors.

Can anything be done to prevent my dog from going blind?

Today’s veterinary ophthalmologists can remove cataracts and restore failing vision in your pet. Most pets have few complications and return to normal running and playing within just a few days of the surgery.

How old will my dog be if he does go blind?

Since the major cause of cataract is hereditary, cataract progression varies from breed to breed. In some breeds cataracts will develop relatively early in life whereas in others the first signs are detected when the dog is older and progression is so slow that dogs still have reasonable sight well into old age.

If the condition is hereditary, what can be done to prevent it from being passed on?

This is a situation where prevention is better than cure. Many organizations offer eye disease certification programs that offer breeders an excellent chance to make sure they are producing disease free puppies. We will be more than happy to discuss details with you.

