

Exposure Keratopathy

What is Exposure Keratopathy?

Exposure Keratopathy is a general term used to describe a syndrome that causes clouding of the cornea, occurring commonly in dogs with prominent eyes.

What causes Exposure Keratopathy?

Exposure Keratopathy is due to a combination of prominent eyes, irritation from hairs, decreased tear film quality or quantity, and decreased or incomplete blink reflex. One or all of these conditions may be present causing chronic irritation and drying of the cornea. This results in formation of blood vessels, pigmentation, and scarring across the cornea, which can impair vision. Some patients can even develop a serious corneal infection.

Are certain breeds more likely to develop Exposure Keratopathy?

Yes, many brachycephalic (short-faced) breeds including Pugs, Boston Terriers, Bulldogs, Shih Tzu, suffer from exposure keratopathy although other breeds may be affected.

What are the signs of Exposure Keratopathy?

Redness and increased discharge from the affected eye is common. You may notice that the eye is cloudy/white due to scarring, red due to blood vessel formation or brown due to pigmentation.

What are the treatment options?

Treatment may include eye drops to improve the tear quantity and quality, and surgery to correct the eyelid abnormalities and to improve the eyelid function. The goal of the medication and surgery is to improve corneal health and preserve vision. Treated eyes become more comfortable and vision often improves. Most patients remain on medication for life. In general, surgery to remove the pigmented section of cornea is not helpful. Diligent treatment with eye drops is the best way to help dogs with exposure keratopathy.