

FELINE UVEITIS

What is uveitis? Uveitis is inflammation of the uveal tissues inside the eye. Inflammation that affects only the front part of the uveal tissue is called anterior uveitis. Inflammation that affects only the back part of the uveal tissue is called posterior uveitis. Inflammation of the entire uveal structures is called panuveitis.

What causes uveitis? In many cases, the cause of uveitis is never determined. It is important to attempt to determine the cause. Several serious diseases such as those caused by the Feline Leukemia virus, Feline Immunodeficiency virus, Feline Infectious Peritonitis virus, *Toxoplasma gondii*, and cancer (lymphoma) may cause uveitis in the cat. These diseases may lead to serious disorders in other parts of the body or even result in death, therefore, early diagnosis may alert your veterinarian to other potential problems.

How do I recognize that my cat has uveitis? Uveitis may be difficult to recognize in cats. Owners often notice a red eye, a change in the color or cloudiness of the eye, a dilated pupil, or loss of vision. Your veterinarian may notice that your cat has uveitis on a routine health examination, without your having noticed prior to problems.

How is uveitis diagnosed? A veterinary ophthalmologist can diagnose uveitis with specialized equipment (a slit-lamp and ophthalmoscope). A glaucoma test is usually performed since many cats with uveitis have an increase in intraocular pressure (glaucoma). Blood and aqueous humor samples are collected and examined for evidence of infection with agents that are known to cause uveitis.

How is uveitis treated? Uveitis can be difficult to treat, and often is a life-long condition that can only be controlled but not cured. Initial treatment consists of topical and systemic anti-inflammatory medications. If the results of diagnostic testing reveal a treatable infection such as Toxoplasmosis, then specific treatment is begun. Severe inflammation necessitates more intensive anti-inflammatory therapy with an injection underneath the conjunctiva. If glaucoma is present, additional medication may be prescribed to lower the eye pressure.

What if the uveitis is not controlled? Uncontrolled inflammation and glaucoma will result in vision loss and/or chronic pain. It is important to follow the recommended treatment and re-examination schedule, so that problems can be detected and treated early.

How often does my cat need to be re-examined? Cats on long-term medication that have controlled uveitis should be examined 3-4 times a year. If the uveitis is poorly controlled, more frequent examinations may be recommended.