

MELTING CORNEAL ULCER

A corneal ulcer is a wound on the surface of the eye. The damage would be similar to a scrape or cut on your skin; both problems result in an unprotected wound. The normal cornea is covered by a layer of protective tissue called the epithelium, sort of like ‘skin’ over the deeper corneal layers. When the epithelium is damaged, infections can occur and result in complete perforation of the eye if left untreated. Clinical signs of a corneal ulcer include squinting, redness, cloudiness, tearing, and lethargy. A special green stain can be used to highlight the ulcer on the cornea.

There are many causes of corneal ulcers such as injuries, abnormal eyelashes that irritate the corneal surface, lack of tear production, and infections. Corneal ulcers are characterized according to location, depth, associated diseases, and cause.

Your pet has been diagnosed with a “melting ulcer”, which is a serious condition that can involve the deeper corneal layers. In this type of ulcer the layers of the cornea progressively melt away, and the eye becomes in danger of perforation. The presence of protease enzymes is thought to be responsible for this corneal disintegration. The destructive enzymes may be produced by bacteria, white blood cells, or cells within the cornea. To try to halt the disintegration of the layers, a topical solution which blocks the activity of protease enzymes will be prescribed, so that the cornea will have a chance to heal. Strong topical antibiotics are also used to prevent or treat bacterial infections. The medications must be used several times a day, and the prognosis for recovery is often guarded. Some cases require surgery to aid with healing.

You should observe your pet daily for comfort level, type of discharge from the eye, depth of ulcer, and redness. Healing ulcers should exhibit the presence of red blood vessels. This is a GOOD sign! Please call if you have any questions.