



## CATARACTS AND

## { CATARACT SURGERY }



## WHEN IS SURGERY INDICATED?

Once the cataract has progressed to blindness in the affected eye, cataract surgery is often recommended. If one eye has a completely formed, vision-impairing cataract, and the opposing eye has a rapidly developing cataract, some veterinary ophthalmologists recommend surgery before the second cataract is complete.

Surgery has been performed successfully on dogs and cats between 6 months and 18 years of age. The pet's general health is evaluated before cataract surgery.



*The ACVO® is continually involved in basic and clinical research developing new diagnostic procedures and treatment regimens. The genetics committee of the ACVO® works closely with breeders to better define and help eliminate inherited ocular diseases. The name of a Diplomate closest to you may be obtained from a general practitioner in your area, by contacting your local or state veterinary medical association, the AVMA, or on-line at:*

[www.acvo.org](http://www.acvo.org)

**“...that light shall prevail  
over darkness...”®**

The lens is a living ocular tissue that, when healthy, is transparent. A normal lens helps focus light on the retina, a light sensitive nerve tissue located in the back of the eye. A cataract is an abnormality of the lens in which an opacity, or a cloudy change in the tissue, scatters light. Hence, the normal composition of the lens is disrupted and its transparency is lost. If a large portion of the lens becomes a cataract, it prevents formed light from reaching the retina, causing poor vision. A cataract can assume a variety of appearances such as small spots, a cracked-ice appearance, a diffuse milky haze, a “pearl-like” sheen, or white streaks. The cataract may initially affect a small area and progress to involve a larger portion of the lens. Rate of progression is difficult to predict, though

it tends to be more rapid in younger animals. Cataracts may develop in one or both eyes.

### **WHAT CAUSES CATARACTS?**

Most cataracts in dogs have a hereditary basis. Cataracts can also result from injury to or inflammation in the eye, or systemic diseases that have an affect on the eyes. Diabetes is the most common disease associated with cataracts in dogs. Although it may be difficult to name the specific cause of cataracts, generally those cataracts that develop in the eyes that are free of signs of disease (whether ocular or systemic) are assumed to be inherited. Poor nutrition is an uncommon cause of cataracts, but has been suspected in some young dogs.



## **UNDERSTANDING CATARACTS**

## **WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR A PET WITH CATARACTS?**

### **WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?**

Medical remedies have been inaccurately advertised as effective for the treatment of cataracts. There is no proven medical treatment known to reverse or slow the progression of, or prevent the formation of a cataract. Some promoted agents actually worsen the cataracts rather than improve the condition. Surgery is the only known treatment both in animals and humans, and often provides a return of functional vision to pets.

### **WHAT DOES CATARACT SURGERY INVOLVE?**

The various surgical procedures available for your pet are demanding and require meticulous and precise microsurgical techniques. Surgery is performed using an operating microscope and sophisticated microsurgical instruments. Two techniques are currently used to remove cataracts from the eye.

### **WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF A CATARACT IS SUSPECTED?**

First arrange to have your pet examined by a board certified veterinary ophthalmologist. Although the lens is an important component of the visual system, a complete eye examination is necessary. Early examination is always recommended. The health of the retina and other parts of the eye should be evaluated prior to the formation of complete cataracts. If the cataract is entirely mature, the area behind the lens may not be able to be examined directly. Therefore, in many cases, an electroretinogram may be recommended to evaluate the retina. The cataract will be classified by cause, area of involvement, and stage of progression. Not all cataracts lead to blindness, and incomplete cataracts may not impair vision significantly. Cataract surgery may be recommended if a pet has experienced visual loss.



## **{ POST-OPERATION CARE}**