



Cataract Surgery in the Dog

Introduction

A cataract is any abnormal cloudiness in the lens of the eye. This may vary from a small area requiring no treatment through to total cataract and blindness. The cloudiness arises from a permanent alteration in the structure of the lens so where it is necessary cataracts can only be corrected by surgery.

The Surgery

The cataract is removed under general anaesthesia by a procedure called phacoemulsification using the same equipment and techniques as in human surgery. We usually insert an artificial lens in the eye to take over the function of the lens which has been removed provided the eye is suitable at the time. An artificial lens is believed to reduce the time taken for the dog to see usefully again and improves the final vision that is achieved. You should not be too concerned, however, if the eye is not suitable for an artificial lens since an eye which was previously blind with a cataract will see much better when it is clear even without an artificial lens.

Pre- and post-operative care

Prior to surgery patients should be in as good a state of general health as is possible and diabetic dogs should be reasonably stable. We will often request a full blood screen to confirm this. In most cases the cataracts are not as urgent or important as the patient's general health and so can wait until other problems are resolved or stabilised. Some diabetic cataracts, however, are urgent and in this situation, it is best to proceed to surgery promptly with our usual close monitoring of the anaesthesia and blood glucose. Really bad teeth need to be treated by the patient's own veterinary practice prior to the surgery. Owners should take into account the dog's temperament. Very restless or aggressive dogs can make medication and clinical examination difficult and this may even prevent us doing full post-operative checks.

Patients are always re-examined the morning following the operation. The following checks are one week later and then at one month. Subsequently two months, three months, six months and 12 months would be typical but this very much depends on the individual case.

It is important that clients are in a position to bring the patient back to us promptly if there is a problem. This applies especially in the first four weeks after the operation.

Eye drops are required for a minimum of six months after surgery. All post-operative re-examinations and drugs are charged to the client along with any additional surgical procedures required.

Complications

Various complications may occur. We anticipate these and take every step to prevent them but it is major surgery for the eye and we cannot eliminate all risks. Although success rates are higher than they used to be complications can occur and an informed decision must be made. Complications may incur additional costs in terms of consultations, medications and procedures and may seriously affect the final outcome. The more important complications are:



Inflammation

All eyes become inflamed after surgery and in most cases this is controllable by medication. Some dogs release a substance called fibrin into the eye which can have harmful consequences. When this occurs it is usually in the first four weeks post-operatively. Fibrin can be dissolved by injection of the enzyme TPA into the eye under sedation and local anaesthetic. TPA is required in 15% of all eyes

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a **raised pressure in the eye** and is always potentially serious. We measure the pressure in the eye at the first consultation and at all subsequent ones as it is important to monitor it. We identify dogs at exceptional risk of glaucoma by a test called gonioscopy performed at the initial consultation but some risk of glaucoma is present in all dogs.

Problems with pressure tend to occur in two situations:

- **The immediate post-operative period**, usually the same day or the first 24 hours. Some dogs sustain high pressures in this period. Although this is usually a temporary problem we take it seriously and may need to take emergency measures to bring the pressure down.
- **Longer term.** Longer term pressure rise is the most serious complication seen. It may cause pain and impair or destroy the patient's sight. This will require ongoing medication and anti-glaucoma drugs are relatively expensive.

Where there are unmanageable complications which are causing pain, despite everyone's best efforts, the most effective means of pain relief may be removal of the eye. Chronic glaucoma is the most common cause. Eye removal is eventually required in 3% of all eyes undergoing cataract surgery.

Lens regrowth

"Can the cataract grow back?" is a logical question to ask before cataract surgery. Some lens cells are always left behind at the time of the operation and so some lens regrowth is quite common. In most cases, however, it is not vigorous and does no harm. In some cases it regrows out of control and can cause inflammation, re-clouding of the eye and other serious complications. If this is happening the regrowth needs to be removed under general anaesthesia. This procedure is simpler and shorter than the original cataract operation. It is unusual to need to repeat it. This procedure is *much more common in young dogs* and owners of young dogs should allow for the possibility of the additional cost.

Other complications

Other uncommon but serious complications include intraocular haemorrhage, intraocular infection and retinal detachment, all of which may be difficult to manage.

Summary

Clients need to be aware of all that is involved so that they can make an informed choice, weighing potential benefits against risks. With the modern methods of cataract surgery success rates are much higher than with older methods. With an incurable problem and a high success rate for the operation clients can embark on cataract surgery with as much confidence as with many other operations commonly performed on dogs.



Cataract Surgery at Eye Veterinary Clinic

This is a quick check-list to help you with your planning for your dog's cataract surgery.

- **Location** - All our surgery takes place at:

**Eye Veterinary Clinic
Marlbrook
Leominster
Herefordshire
HR6 0PH**

info@eyevetclinic.co.uk

where we have the trained staff and facilities.

- The number for **all** communications including out-clinic appointments and emergencies is **01568 616616**.
- **We are not in Leominster itself** but on the A49 next to the Marlbrook roundabout 4 miles south of Leominster and 8 miles north of Hereford. If you use SatNav be sure to enter HR6 0PH.
- Additional drops will be given when your dog arrives and then the ultrasound scan will be performed while you are still present, and you can be with your dog for this.
- Post-operatively we need to monitor the eyes closely for the rest of the day particularly the pressure. If the pressure rises dangerously then additional drops or procedures may be necessary.
- Dogs are very welcome to stay with us overnight, but we recommend that they do not stay in the hospital as they are usually much happier with their owners. We will liaise with you on the day about timings if you are collecting them. If a dog is very agitated with us, we may have to ask that your pet spends the night with you where it will be calmer. In some cases, we may call owners back to sit with a restless dog during the day. Constant barking and excitement can be dangerous for the eyes.
- We have a list of dog-friendly B & Bs nearby for owners who wish to reduce their travelling or have the dog with them for the night if they cannot get home.
- All dogs need to be seen for:
 - **24 hour post-op check** the following morning if they have not spent the night in the hospital.
 - **Next check 5-7 days post-op**. For clients who attend one of our out clinics it is still preferable if this check is done at Leominster. Please discuss this with us.
- Subsequently one month, three months, six months and 12 months would be typical, but this very much depends on the individual case.

It is important to allow for these checks in your planning. ***If there are problems with the eyes then additional appointments may be necessary.***

Our nurses are very experienced in arranging cataract surgery and can answer most questions themselves or refer you to one of the vets if necessary. Feel free to ask our nurses any questions that you may have. We are here to help.



Prices for Cataract Surgery from January 2021 (prices subject to review)

The cost of surgery includes examination at 24hrs and 7 days after surgery. Further examinations are charged at £140.00. The prices quoted are for animals up to 10kg. A surcharge of £4.04 per kg is made for heavier animals due to extra anaesthesia costs.

Summary of costs for an uncomplicated cataract surgery (dogs up to 10Kg)		
	One Eye	Both eyes
<u>Assessment</u>		
Initial consultation	£210	£210
Gonioscopy	Included	Included
<u>Day of Surgery</u>		
Ultrasound scan	£237.00	£237.00
Cataract removal one eye (inc lens)	£2949.80	n/a
Cataract removal both eyes (inc lens)	n/a	£4101.60
Average cost of post-op drugs	£155	£155
Re-examinations (minimum of 3)	£420	£420
Total	£3971.80	£5123.60

This is for the **uncomplicated** case. Any complications may require additional consultations, procedures, hospitalisation and drugs at our standard charges.

Some patients require the following additional procedures:

Electroretinography	£527.50
Vitrectomy (may be necessary during surgery)	£283.00

For uncomplicated cases you should budget for at least three further re-examinations (£140 each visit), plus any drugs that your pet may require for the next 6 months.

We are always happy to provide written prescriptions to help keep costs as low as possible.



Current Charges and Financial Arrangements

From January 2021. These charges and arrangements are subject to review without notice.

Consultations

Initial consultation	£210
Re-examination	£140
Initial consultation out of hours	£335
Re-examination out of hours	£252
Nurse call in fee for consultations	£80
Nurse call in fee for surgery	£130

Out-of-hours examinations incur an additional fee for attendance of a veterinary nurse and out-of-hours surgery also incurs an additional fee as detailed above.

Insurance

Insurance claim administration fee per form	£11.85
Direct claim administration fee per form	£34.00

This charge covers the administration costs of completing each insurance form. This fee will not be reclaimable from the insurance company. ***After completion we are required to return claim forms to the client for onward submission to the insurance company.***

We ask that all accounts are settled by the client at the time of the consultation or procedure. We will process your claim form as quickly as possible. In exceptional circumstances we will submit direct claims to insurance companies for surgery invoices only but not for drugs or consultations. Any such direct claim must be authorised by our staff in advance. Clients should be aware that any excesses payable remain their liability.

Prescriptions

Prescription Fee 1 item	£17.00
Prescription Fee 2 items	£19.85
Prescription Fee 3 items	£22.75