



**MALVERN
VET
HOSPITAL**



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Cloudy Eyes

Cloudy eyes commonly occur in dogs and are caused by many conditions. Two of the most common causes of cloudy eyes in dogs are cataracts and nuclear sclerosis.

Signs of cataracts and nuclear sclerosis are very similar; a dog's eyes become clouded, foggy, with a blue tinge that gives the impression your dog may very well be blind or hard of seeing. In the case of cataracts, this might be true.

What is nuclear sclerosis?

Nuclear sclerosis is a normal change that occurs in the lenses of older dogs. Nuclear sclerosis appears as a slight greying of the lens. It usually occurs in both eyes at the same time and occurs in most dogs over six years of age. The lens becomes harder and dense, which makes the light going to the lens appear to be scattered and produces the classic haze of nuclear sclerosis. Because the condition is part of the normal aging process, is not painful, usually does not significantly affect the vision of the dog, and there is no treatment

What is a cataract?

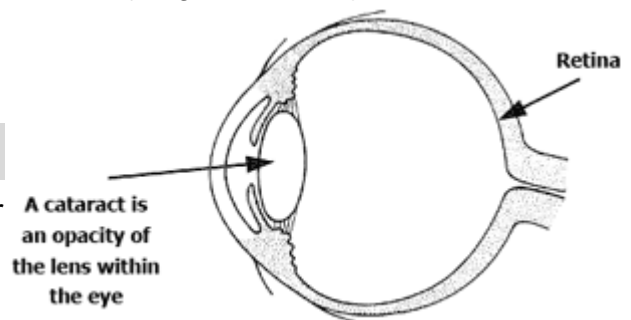
Inside the eye is a *lens* that focuses light on the back of the eye or the *retina*. Vision occurs at the retina. The structure of the eye is similar to a camera, which has a lens to focus light on the film. A cloudy or opaque lens is called a *cataract*.

What causes cataracts?

The most common cause of cataracts in the dog is inherited disease. Other causes include injuries to the eye or diseases such as diabetes mellitus ("sugar diabetes"). Some cataracts appear to occur spontaneously and are age related.

Will my dog go blind?

If cataracts occupy less than 30% of the lens or if only one lens is affected, they rarely cause diminished vision. When the opacity covers about 60% of the total lens area, visual impairment often becomes apparent. If the opacity progresses to 100% of the lens, the dog is blind in the affected eye. However, whether the cataract remains static or progresses will depend on the type of cataract, the breed and other risk factors.



Cataracts may also be described as *incipient*, *immature*, *mature*, and *hyper mature*.



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- Incipient – so small it often requires magnification to diagnose. These involve less than 15% of the lens and cause no visual deficits.
- Immature – involves greater than 15% of the lens and often involves multiple layers of the lens or different areas. The retina can still be seen during examination and visual deficits are typically mild.
- Mature – involve the entire lens and the retina cannot be seen during examination. Visual deficits are often significant with blindness or near-blindness often observed.
- Hypermature – the lens begins to shrink and the lens capsule appears wrinkled. Lens-induced uveitis often occurs at this stage.

How are cataracts treated?

The treatment of cataracts depends on the cause and nature of the cataract. Surgery is currently the only cure.