

---

# WHAT DOES YOUR WESTIE SEE?

---

By Kay McGuire, DVM, MS

**W**e are all aware that our dogs have better motion perception and better peripheral vision than we do. A squirrel will always get their undivided attention.



Common eye problems seen that may hamper their ability are cataracts and dry eye syndrome. Cataracts may be inherited or the result of an endocrinopathy like diabetes mellitus. Surgical removal of cataracts usually costs in the range of \$2500-\$3500 which is prohibitive for many owners.

Dry Eye syndrome is better known as keratoconjunctivitis sicca (KCS). Both of these conditions were listed with frequency in the WHWTCA most recent Health Survey. The causes of KCS include congenital disorders (puppies), infection (canine

distemper virus), drug induced (sulfa antibiotics), removal of the tear gland of the third eyelid (cherry eye), and breed inherited susceptibility. The breeds most commonly involved are Cocker Spaniels, Shih Tzus, Lhasa Apsos, Bulldogs, Schnauzers, and Westies.

The most likely clinical signs of KCS are heavy mucous and mattering in the eyes. There may actually be an infection of the skin around the eye due to the increased matter. Your veterinarian will be able to measure the actual tear production with thin white strips of paper which wick up available

moisture. As the condition worsens, there is pain and eventual scarring and pigmentation of the surface of the cornea. Permanent vision loss is the eventual consequence if allowed to go untreated.

The goal of treatment for dry eye includes stimulation of the tear production and decreasing scar tissue. The drug that has shown the best result is Cyclosporin. This drug is used in tissue transplant support and when applied topically to the cornea will increase tear production in 75% of dogs. It is usually applied one-two times daily and must be done consistently. If doses are skipped the condition will revert quickly. If drug therapy is not successful, then transposition of the salivary gland duct can be done to bring moisture to the eye.

Recently the WHWTCA has advocated for members to fulfill health clearances for members' breeding stock. These clearances include eye examinations by a certified veterinary ophthalmologist. As this practice increases, hopefully inherited eye conditions in the Westie will decrease.