

Eye Health: Causes of Irritation and Infections

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The risks of eye damage

Your dog's eyes are one of the most important organs in his body, but it is not difficult for eyes to become damaged.

Anytime your dog's eyes are irritated, they may become red, inflamed and itchy. In reacting to an itchy or painful eye, your dog may rub his head against carpeting or furniture or try to use his paws with their rough, damaging nails. This can cause even more damage to the eye.

If your dog scratches his eyes hard enough, he may cause a scrape to the cornea (the clear surface of the eye). This corneal erosion, if not managed, may cause a deep wound on the eye called a corneal ulcer, possibly leading to vision loss. If you see signs of redness, swelling, excessive tearing, unwillingness to open the eye, or relentless scratching of the eyes, have your dog examined by a veterinarian immediately. While not all causes of eye conditions can be prevented, you can do your part to care for your dog's eyes.

To help prevent infections and irritation:

- Use sterile eyewash such as [Eye Clens®](#) to keep the area around your dog's eye clean
- Keep all hair out of your dog's eyes
- Do not allow your dog to hang his head out of the car window
- Apply a protective ophthalmic ointment before bathing, facial cleanings, and insecticide treatment

Causes of Eye Irritations Include:

- Allergies
- Infections
- Foreign bodies, such as plant awns or thorns, or particles that may enter your dog's eyes if riding with his head out of the car window
- Branches or grasses hitting the eye while the dog walks in thick vegetation
- Hair in the eye or malformed eyelashes
- Chemical irritation, such as shampoo
- Scratches from roughhousing or fighting with other animals

Any of the above can lead to infection, usually caused by bacteria. The most common inflammation of the eye is also the easiest to detect: conjunctivitis. Symptoms of conjunctivitis include redness around the eye and a yellow or greenish discharge.