



By your veterinary ophthalmologist

**Dr. Franck Ollivier**  
DMV, Ph.D, Dipl ACVO et ECVO  
Veterinary ophthalmology specialist (FR)

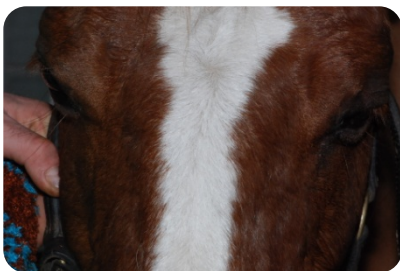
## Alert signs of ocular diseases in pets

Some ocular diseases can progress very quickly and lead to the loss of the vision and/or the loss of the eye. This document reviews the signs that should be an alert for the pet's owners.

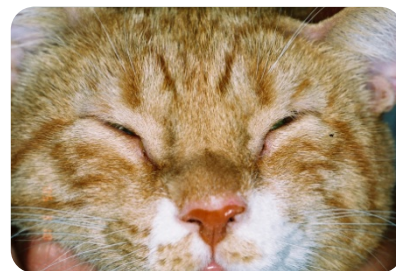
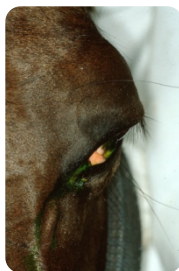
### Signs of ocular pain

#### Blepharospasm/rubbing

It is very frequent to observe blepharospasm when an animal has an ocular disease: he will blink the eyelids more often. He might keep his eye shot and might try to rub it to relieve the pain. However, few breeds (dogs and cats with round head and flat face such as Pugs, Pekinese, Bulldog, Shih Tzus, Persians) have a less sensitive cornea and do not blink that much.



Blepharospasm in a horse with uveitis (left eye)



Blepharospasm in a cat with a corneal ulcer in both eyes

#### Ocular discharge

Very often, a discharge can be observed at the level of the eye and the nare. The discharge can be clear (aqueous), mucous, purulent, with a yellowish/greenish (if a bacterial infection is present) even brownish.



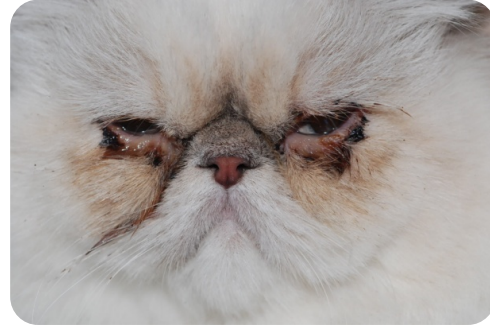
Aqueous discharge in a dog



Purulent discharge in a guinea pig, red conjunctiva white velum on the cornea (ulcer)



Purulent discharge in a rabbit



Brownish discharge in a cat

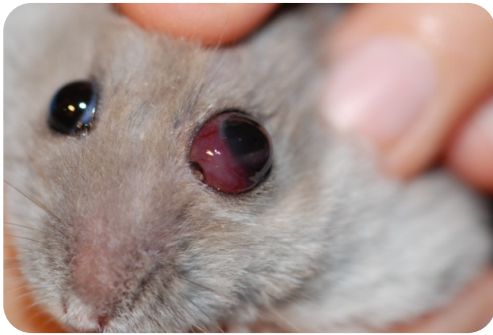
## Change of the aspect of the eye

### Position of the eye

The position of the eye can be compared to the other eye. Sometimes, the eye can be more inside or enophthalmia (the ocular pain can lead the eye to be inside as a mean to protect it) or more outside or exophthalmia. This can be due to a mass behind the eye (cancer or tooth abscess) that pushes the globe outside of the orbital cavity.



Left eye in a rabbit that is a bit "outside" because of a tooth root abscess



Left eye in a Russian hamster that is a bit "outside" because of a retro-orbital tumor



Because of a retro-orbital tumor left eye in a cat that is a bit "outside"



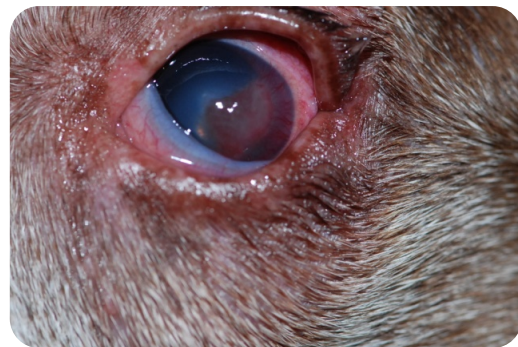
Eye a bit more inside (enophthalmia) in a dog

### Redness of the conjunctiva

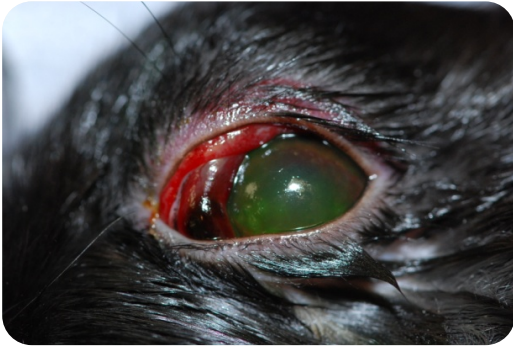
The redness of the conjunctiva is an ocular sign that is observed in many ocular diseases. They can be benign simple inflammation of the conjunctiva (or conjunctivitis) or severe (corneal ulcer, glaucoma). It is an ocular sign fairly easy to see but it does not indicate the severity of the ocular disease



Redness of the conjunctiva in a horse (uveitis)



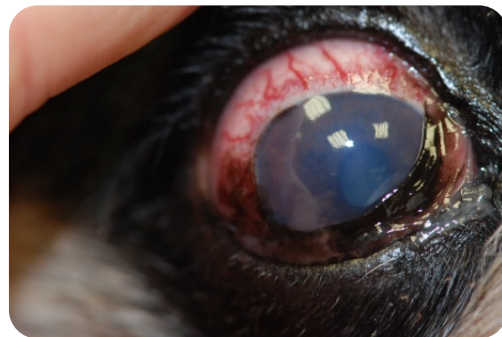
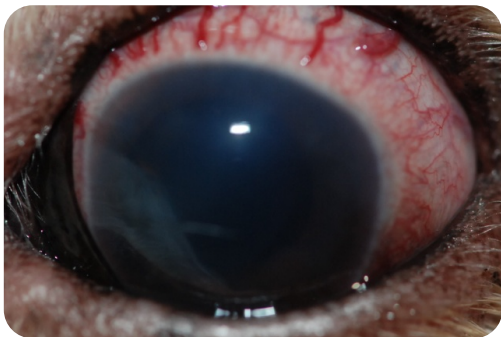
Redness of the conjunctiva in a dog (corneal ulcer)



Redness of the conjunctiva in a rabbit (uveitis)

### **New tortuous vessels**

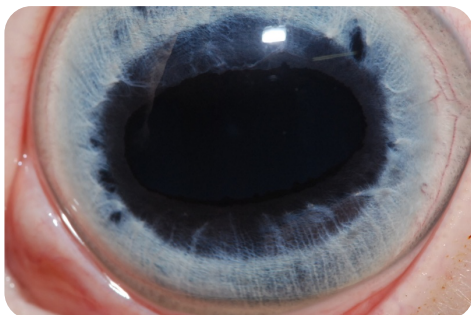
In case of glaucoma (increase of the pressure in the eye), some vessels stretch and appear tortuous on the white part of the eye (the sclera). It can be difficult to distinguish them from the vessels from the conjunctiva when this one is inflamed. However, these tortuous vessels are a sign of glaucoma. Ocular disease that needs to be treated as soon as possible as it leads to severe ocular pain and irreversible blindness very rapidly.



Tortuous vessels on the white sclera in two dogs with glaucoma (note the redness of the conjunctiva and blue velum of the cornea.)

### **Velum on the cornea that is normally transparent**

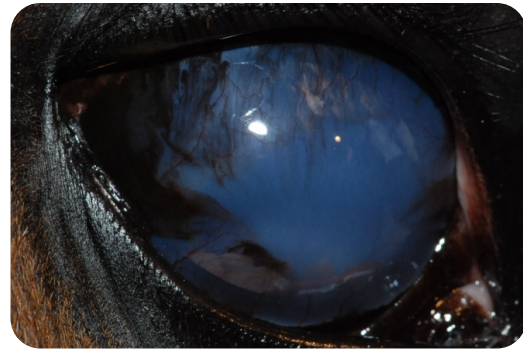
The cornea is the windshield of the eye; the light and the image get to the eye through the cornea. The cornea is completely transparent, without vessel, without pigment. A whitish, bluish "foggy" aspect of the cornea can be observed in case of corneal ulcer (corneal wound), uveitis (inflammation in the eye), glaucoma (increase of pressure in the eye). This ocular sign is usually a sign of a disease that needs to be treated rapidly, and therefore the owner should seek a veterinary advice if the sign is observed.



Normal cornea in a horse: completely transparent and the inside of the eye can be seen (a blue iris that is beautiful!!!)



Vessels in the cornea of a horse  
(Inflammation of the cornea)



Pigment and blue velum on the cornea of  
a horse (Glaucoma in a horse)



Vessels and blue velum in a Cornea of a  
dog (Ulcer)



Vessels and blue velum in a Cornea of a  
rabbit (Ulcer)

## Changes in the behavior of the animal

Any unusual behavior should alert the owner, like:

- An animal that rubs its eyes frequently,
- An animal that seems lost, hesitating to move, bumping into things,
- An animal that stays alone, in a confined space.

These changes can be an alert sign of an ocular disease that is painful (corneal ulcer, uveitis) or can lead to the loss of vision (glaucoma, retinal detachment).

It is very important that the owner observe unusual behavior of the pet as well as signs that are expression of ocular disease. We recommend to rapidly seeking the advice of your regular veterinarian who will establish a diagnosis, evaluate the severity of the disease, start a treatment and eventually refer you to a veterinary ophthalmologist.