



Ocular Disorders

The horse's eye

The horse's eye is a vulnerable and sensitive structure and its prominence in the head predisposes it to a variety of diseases. Eye injuries and diseases in the horse are common and if inappropriately treated can result in permanent damage to eye resulting in loss of vision or even loss of the eye.

Signs of ocular disease

- Closed eye/squinting
- Sensitivity to light
- Watery eyes
- Swelling and or redness
- Discharge
- Behavioural changes
- Cloudiness
- Spooking (especially in poor light)

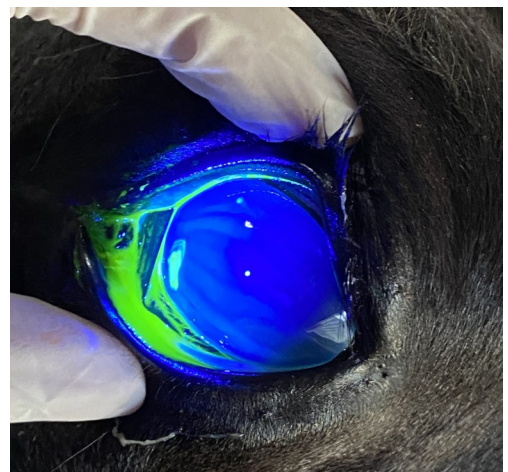


Ocular Examinations

The future sight and comfort of the sore eye depends on the right treatment being instigated for the particular condition. Therefore, an ocular examination by your vet is necessary to achieve the correct diagnosis before prescribing treatments. Some treatments may help one condition, whilst causing another to deteriorate. Access to a darkened stable/area is required for a complete examination.

Vets often put a coloured dye ('Fluorescein') into the horse's eye to detect any ulcers (pictured), or damage to the surface of the cornea. One of the main difficulties in diagnosing the wide variety of problems seen in the horses' eye is the pain, which prevents a proper examination without the aid of drugs. Pain represents itself in a very similar fashion despite the range of different conditions –

swollen eyelids, squinting, crying and light sensitivity are regularly seen. The use of sedation and nerve blocks around the eye will help the correct diagnosis to be made, offer pain relief and safety for your horse during examination. Starting the correct treatment as quickly as possible is paramount and an early examination of any 'sore eye' is strongly advised – never just assume that a swollen eye is due to flies!





Kings Bounty Equine Practice Client Fact Sheet

Common eye problems

- Conjunctivitis
- Corneal ulcers
- Uveitis

Corneal ulcers: common and usually caused by trauma, flies or foreign bodies such as grass seeds. Such irritation can result in a break of the thin outer membrane of the cornea, allowing bacteria to enter and cause further damage. They should be treated immediately as they can become severely infected. Treatment is usually antibiotic eye drops to help control the infection. Plasma (from the horse's blood) can also be used, to help speed the ulcer healing. Anti-inflammatory medication can also be administered to make the horse more comfortable.

Uveitis: inflammation of the uveal tract. It can occur as a primary disease or secondary to other conditions affecting the eye such as trauma or corneal ulcers. Some horses will develop equine recurrent uveitis (also known as moon blindness). The severity of the condition and the interval between episodes varies with each individual. If not treated promptly and aggressively uveitis can lead to long term complications such as adhesions between the iris and cornea and in very severe cases, blindness. Treatment is provided to reduce pain and inflammation within the eye and to dilate the pupil in order to provide pain relief and to prevent adhesions.

Treatment

Many eye problems can be treated by topical eye ointments, which will need to be administered several times daily, as prescribed by your vet. Serious infections, ulcers or eye trauma may require a number of medications to be administered at frequent intervals and for these cases it may be recommended that your horse is hospitalised for treatment.



How to prevent eye problems

It is good practice to check your horse's eyes daily so you can spot any problems

- Using fly masks, preferably with UV protection
- Ensuring there are no protruding objects in your horse's field or stable

Getting your horse used to having the area around their eyes handled will help if any treatment is ever needed