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GLAUCOMA

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Glaucoma is defined as an elevation of the pressure within the eye in all species known as “intraocular pressure” or IOP. Glaucoma can be painful and lead to blindness. There are several causes of glaucoma such as inflammation, trauma, to genetic defects or breed predilection. In all cases, early detection, medication and veterinary monitoring are key factors in preserving vision in your pet.

The diagnosis of glaucoma is made with an instrument called a Tonometer. This instrument measures the intraocular pressure in mmHG. The front part of the eye is filled with fluid – this fluid nourishes the cells inside the eye and keeps the shape of the eyeball round. When the fluid production exceeds the amount drained the pressure increases. The normal IOP of dogs and cats is approximately 12-24 mmHg. When the IOP is higher than 24 mmHg it will start to affect the other structures inside the eye. The increase in pressure can cause irreparable damage to the retina and optic nerve, leading to blindness.

Once glaucoma is diagnosed in your pet a specific medical therapy will be prescribed to control the IOP. It is important to understand that glaucoma is a disease that is controlled but not cured. Control is achieved with chronic (daily) medications. There will be eye drops, usually more than one and possibly oral tablets. The eye drops will be given up to 4 times daily. It is of utmost importance to give the doses as prescribed to preserve vision and normal intraocular pressure.

In almost all cases the medications will fail at some point in time to control the IOP and surgical options will be necessary to preserve vision. Current surgical therapy uses a laser. In addition to laser surgery a tiny shunt or drain is placed inside the eye to drain some of the fluid caused by the laser during the healing process. This procedure is done with a general anesthesia and in most cases your pet will go home the same day.

After surgery it is important to continue to give the medications as prescribed to obtain the best possible outcome. Your doctor will need to monitor the intraocular pressures and frequent visits may need to be scheduled.

As always, should any problems or questions arise or if you notice an increase in redness of the eye, squinting, increased tearing, gray or cloudy appearance to the eye or sudden decrease in vision – please contact our office immediately.