



OPHTHALMOLOGY:

INDOLENT CORNEAL ULCERS IN DOGS

What is an indolent corneal ulcer?

An indolent corneal ulcer is the result of a corneal defect. This is also known as refractory epithelial erosion. This defect is found in the superficial portion of the corneal stroma just beneath the epithelium. The defect prevents the normal adhesion of the epithelium to the underlying stroma. As a result, these ulcers do not heal with simple medical therapy or take an extremely long time to heal (several months). When healing takes too long, blood vessels may grow into the cornea creating scarring. Most patients with this condition are painful until the defect is healed completely. Indolent corneal ulcers are also called persistent corneal ulcers, refractory corneal ulcers, or boxer ulcers. The corneal defect often affects both eyes though not always at the same time.

Typical scenario

Indolent corneal ulcers are seen in middle-age to older dogs. Ulcers that look like indolent corneal ulcers in young dogs are often due to chronic ongoing irritants such as abnormal eyelash hairs or foreign bodies. The disorder is seen frequently in Boxers and Golden Retrievers however, any breed can be affected. Unlike other types of corneal ulcers, trauma is not required to create indolent corneal ulcers. Usually these dogs have been treated with standard medical therapy without resolving the problem, or the ulcer continually gets better and worse.

Treatment

The treatment of indolent corneal ulcers is aimed at the defect in corneal stroma. All the loose epithelium on the cornea is removed. In most cases, the debridement is followed by a procedure called a grid keratotomy or a superficial keratectomy. **A newer procedure called a diamond burr keratectomy, achieves excellent results with rapid healing and less scarring.** Following the procedure a bandage contact lens or a dissolving contact lens called a collagen shield may be placed. Medical therapy after these procedures is similar to a simple corneal ulcer, consisting of topical antibiotics to prevent infection and cytoplegic agents to manage pain. These procedures will usually heal this type of ulcer in 2-3 weeks.

MVS Board-Certified

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MVS ophthalmologists serve as an extension of your practice. Our diplomates have years of additional training beyond a DVM degree and have been board-certified by the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmology to assure competency in advanced veterinary ophthalmology.

Questions?

Our ophthalmologists are available for questions and consultations on medical conditions. They are also on-call for consultation on cases seen through the emergency service 24/7.

LOCATIONS

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Additional locations for consultation include: Grand Rapids, Toledo, Ann Arbor and Grayling.