

Conjunctivitis in Dogs

Conjunctivitis in Dogs: What You Need to Know

Conjunctivitis, often called “pink eye,” is a common eye condition in dogs that involves inflammation of the conjunctiva—the mucous membrane that lines the eyelid and covers the surface of the eyeball. This membrane acts as a protective barrier against infection and foreign objects, but when it gets inflamed, it causes discomfort and can lead to more serious issues if untreated.

If you notice any signs of conjunctivitis in your dog, it’s essential to get them to the vet as soon as possible.



Symptoms of Conjunctivitis in Dogs

Conjunctivitis can cause noticeable discomfort and irritation for your dog. The typical symptoms include:

- **Watery or weepy eyes**
- **Eye discharge**, which can range from clear to green or yellow
- **Redness** in the whites of the eyes, often accompanied by swelling around the eye area
- **Pawing at the eyes** due to irritation
- **Frequent squinting or blinking** more than usual

These symptoms could be associated with other eye conditions, so it’s important to visit your vet to get a proper diagnosis.

Conjunctivitis can start in one eye but may spread to the other if it's caused by contamination. However, if an allergy or virus is the culprit, both eyes may be affected



right from the start.

Why It's Important to Act Quickly

Even if the symptoms seem mild, it's critical to consult your vet at the first signs of conjunctivitis. Left untreated, it could lead to permanent damage or even vision loss.

What Causes Conjunctivitis in Dogs?

There are several potential causes of conjunctivitis in dogs, and your vet will need to determine what's behind the infection. Common causes include:

- **Foreign objects** like grass seeds or dirt getting into the eye
- **Allergies** to things like pollen, dust, or chemicals
- **Eye injuries** or bites near the eye
- **Dry eye**, a condition where the eyes don't produce enough tears
- **Eye diseases**, such as glaucoma
- **Bacterial infections**, which typically cause green or yellow discharge
- **Viral infections**, such as canine herpes or distemper
- **Parasites**, like eye worms

Treating Conjunctivitis in Dogs

Your vet will conduct a full eye examination to determine the exact cause of the conjunctivitis and recommend the appropriate treatment. Depending on the situation, treatments may include:

- **Eye drops** to reduce inflammation and fight infection
- **Antihistamines or steroids**, if allergies are the cause
- **Surgery**, in more serious cases, such as when foreign objects are lodged in the eye or tear ducts are blocked



Treatment for Foreign Objects

If a foreign object, like a grass seed or piece of grit, is causing the issue, your vet may need to sedate your dog to safely remove it. Surgery might also be necessary for a blocked tear duct. Afterward, your vet will likely prescribe eye drops, antibiotics, or both to help your dog heal.

Allergy Treatment

If an allergy is to blame, your vet may recommend antihistamines or steroids to reduce inflammation. Typically, these medications help clear up the symptoms in just a few days.

Bacterial Infection Treatment

For bacterial infections, antibiotic eye drops are the usual course of treatment. If your vet suspects a more serious underlying cause, they may suggest further tests. During recovery, your dog may need to wear a **buster collar** (also known as a cone) to prevent them from scratching their eyes and causing more irritation.



Will My Dog Recover from Conjunctivitis?

Most dogs make a full recovery from conjunctivitis, especially when treated early. However, in rare cases, a dog may be left with some sight problems or scarring on the eye. Depending on the underlying cause, some dogs may require long-term treatment.

If your dog has allergies, conjunctivitis may flare up occasionally, but early treatment will always offer the best chance to avoid complications.

Can Humans Catch Conjunctivitis from Dogs?

It's very unlikely for humans to catch conjunctivitis from a dog, but it's still crucial to get your pet to the vet for proper diagnosis and treatment. Prompt action will keep your dog comfortable and help prevent the infection from worsening.

By keeping an eye out for the symptoms and acting quickly, you can ensure your furry friend gets the care they need to recover from conjunctivitis and avoid any long-term damage.