

LENS LUXATION



SEADOWN
VETERINARY SERVICES



What is lens luxation?

The lens is situated approximately in the centre of the eye. In the normal animal it is clear, and held firmly in position by fine fibres all the way around its circumference called zonules. Its job is to focus light onto the back of the eye (the retina).

Lens luxation occurs when the lens is no longer held securely in its normal position. The lens is then free to move around inside the eye. It can either move forwards into the front chamber (in front of the pupil), or backwards further into the posterior chamber behind the pupil. This movement can lead to a number of problems.

Obviously the lens can no longer function to aid focusing, so vision will be poorer. More worrying though, if the lens moves into the front of the eye the flow of fluid (aqueous) within the eye can be disrupted, and the outflow of fluid can be obstructed leading to an increase in pressure (glaucoma). This is a very painful condition and is sight threatening.

The damage done to the eye rapidly becomes irreversible. For this reason lens luxation in the dog is an emergency. If we are able to reduce pressure inside the eye, then it may be possible to save vision. This is the aim of surgery. Cats seem to cope far better with luxated lenses and although glaucoma is a risk it is less of an inevitability.

What is lens luxation surgery?

Surgery is performed through an incision across the top of the cornea. The entire lens is then extracted through that incision. The wound is then stitched up with very fine dissolvable sutures. The lens is then not able to obstruct the flow of fluid and cause glaucoma.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

If the lens remains in the front chamber of the eye then sadly there is no alternative to surgery if we are to save the eye. If however if the lens can be kept behind the pupil then although vision is less than perfect we will often choose to treat luxations medically. This is done using an eye drop which keeps the pupil very small and the lens, due to its large size, cannot fall into the front chamber where it can cause glaucoma.

What to expect

The aim of surgery is to provide the animal with a comfortable, visual eye. Sadly in the case of lens luxation this is not always possible. Surgery is successful in approximately 60% of cases provided there has not been any glaucoma prior to surgery. If there has been a transient glaucoma then the success rate falls to around 40%. Unfortunately some patients will suffer from inflammation and glaucoma despite surgery—they may require long term medication and follow up.

After-care

Usually your pet will be discharged the day after surgery. It is advisable to keep an Elizabethan (buster) collar on for at least 2 weeks. Cats should be kept indoors initially, and dogs taken out on a lead for eliminations only. Avoid playing games which involve excessive head shaking. You will be sent home with eye drops and oral medications with instructions for their use which the nurse will discuss with you. It is a good idea to have a good look at the eye when you take the animal home so that you can be aware of any changes. Particularly look for cloudiness of the surface of the eye and excessive redness, the eye should be open and comfortable. Please phone your own vet or Seadown if you have any concerns regarding the recovery of your animal from the anaesthetic or the condition of his/her eyes.



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