

Eye Drops Slow Progression of Dogs' Corneal Dystrophy

Corneal dystrophy in dogs has no known cause or cure.

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Q. My 3-year-old Shetland Sheepdog has a slight hazy spot on the surface in the center of each eye. They are not the same size. Our vet says she thinks it is corneal dystrophy. We will be seeing a specialist soon for a diagnosis and treatment. Is this a common problem for Shelties? Is there the possibility of blindness? Is it hereditary?

A. It does sound like your Sheltie may have corneal dystrophy. This is a genetic disease that tends to occur more in breeds such as Boston Terriers, Chihuahuas, Dachshunds and Shelties. There is no known underlying cause.

Treatment usually consists of eye drops that help slow the progression of the disease and prevent a corneal ulcer. Unfortunately, the disease tends to progress slowly over time, despite treatment, but does not usually affect vision or cause long-term problems.

In more severe cases, a surgical procedure can improve the corneas. It's good that you're consulting with a veterinary ophthalmologist because he or she will have the advanced training and experience needed to recognize and treat this condition.