

Treat Dog's Dry Eye With Artificial Tears

KCS, or dry eye, occurs when a dog's eye doesn't produce enough tears.

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. I am about to foster a 9-month-old Miniature Pinscher. She was born with small tear ducts and has to use eye drops two times a week. They say it's not contagious. What do you know about this condition? The dog's current caretaker says it's no big deal, but I want to make sure because I have a Min Pin of my own.

A. It sounds like your foster Min Pin has a condition known as KCS (keratoconjunctivitis sicca), or dry eye. Sometimes, communication between veterinarians and pet owners is a little like playing the game Telephone, where the message gets slightly changed along the way. With dry eye, it's not the tear ducts that are too small, but the tear-producing glands are not producing a normal amount of tears.

This may be due to an overactive immune system, which can attack the tear producing glands. It can also be caused by the surgical removal of the tear glands due to a condition known as cherry eye. These days, when veterinarians treat cherry eye they reposition the tear glands, but don't remove them.

Supplementing the dog's natural tears with artificial tears should effectively prevent your dog from developing any eye problems. Left untreated, dry eye will result in scarring of the cornea, eventual blindness and severe eye pain. In addition to artificial tears, you may want to ask your veterinarian about treating the eyes with a medication known as cyclosporine, which helps reduce the destructive activity of the immune system.