

Blue Eye: A Condition Caused by Canine Hepatitis in Dogs

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'Blue eye' is a term used to describe cloudy corneas as a result of an adenovirus type 1 infection. Adenovirus type 1 is a severe viral disease affecting dogs of all ages. Usually the liver is affected, hence the name hepatitis, but occasionally the eye is also involved, hence the term 'Hepatitis Blue Eye.'

What are the symptoms?

About 10 days after exposure to the virus, the corneas appear blue or very hazy. Most patients squint and the eye may tear excessively. Puppies are more commonly involved than adults. Signs such as lethargy, poor appetite, nausea, jaundice (a yellowing of the skin, eyes, and membranes), bloating, or even death may be noted, if the liver is severely affected by the adenovirus infection. Sometimes the vaccination for hepatitis could actually cause the blue eye, hence the popular name 'blue eye reaction.' This reaction is seldom seen with modern vaccines.

What are the risks?

Once the patient's body fights off the viral infection, the eyes will clear. Several weeks may be required for the eyes to become normal again. In severe cases involving the liver, death can result.

What is the management?

Fortunately, excellent and safe vaccines for adenovirus type 1 are available and usually administered yearly to prevent this disease. In animals not protected, life-saving treatments may be needed, including hospitalization and intravenous fluids.