Cataract Surgery

A cataract is any opacity within the lens of the eye. The lens sits within the eye and helps to focus images onto the retina. Cataracts can be caused by genetics, diabetes, aging, and other diseases of the eye, such as retinal disease or inflammation. If cataracts are severe enough, visual deficits can be noted at home or in unfamiliar environments (e.g. bumping into things, missing treats or stairs).

What do I need to do for my pet prior to cataract surgery?

In order to ensure the best chance of vision after cataract surgery, the health of both eyes and the animal are evaluated. This includes:

**Health of the Eye**
- Complete ophthalmic exam by an ophthalmologist, including tests to evaluate tear production and intraocular pressure
- Electroretinogram (ERG) – this is an electrical test used to evaluate the health of the retina behind the lens, usually performed without general anesthesia
- Ultrasound of the eye to evaluate the structural integrity of the lens, retina and fluid behind the lens (the vitreous)

**Health of the Animal**
- Physical exam, including listening to the heart and lungs
- Basic blood and urine tests to evaluate the overall health of the animal

**Diabetic animals should receive additional diagnostics**
- Fructosamine and/or glucose curve should be performed by your referring veterinarian to evaluate for adequate diabetic control (occasional spot-checks at home are not adequate prior to surgery)
- Urine culture collected steriley directly from the bladder, to ensure there is no active urinary tract infection present

These evaluations should be performed within one month of the planned surgery to ensure we have the most up-to-date picture of your pet’s health.

If we have concerns regarding the health of your pet or your pet’s eye, we may recommend additional treatments or diagnostics prior to surgery.

If the evaluations indicate that the chance of good vision after surgery is low, or if anesthesia or surgery may compromise the health of your pet, we may not recommend going forward with cataract surgery.
**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **What are the costs of the surgery?**
   
   The estimated cost of the initial eye exam and diagnostics is approximately $200.
   
   Surgery (ERG, ultrasound, blood work included) is approximately $5,800-$6,900 (includes both eyes).
   
   These costs are only estimates and may increase or decrease depending on the nature of the cataracts, the presence of systemic disease (e.g. diabetes), and if complications occur during or after surgery.

2. **How long will my pet have to wear a cone?**
   
   Your pet will have to wear a cone (E-collar) for at least 2 to 4 weeks after surgery to make sure they do not damage the stitches that are placed in the eye. This is important because if they traumatize the surgery site there is an increased chance of infection or ulceration, which could jeopardize vision or comfort.

3. **Can the cataracts come back after surgery?**
   
   True cataract regrowth does not occur after surgery. However, some residual lens cells can turn into scar tissue, tiny bubbles or mild regrowth of lens material within the lens capsule. These changes may require longer term anti-inflammatory drops to prevent any low-grade inflammation, but they rarely significantly impair the vision or require additional surgical removal. These changes are more common in very young or diabetic dogs.

4. **Will my pet be able to see immediately after surgery?**
   
   In most cases, yes. If the cataracts are the sole reason for visual impairment, most of our patients are able to see much better after the surgery. The vision may not be crystal clear at first because some cloudiness occurs from the procedure, but that should improve with time.

**Have more questions?**

Please don’t hesitate to contact the Comparative Ophthalmology Service at 614-292-3551 to let us know if you have any further questions or concerns about cataract surgery or your pet’s eyes.