

Health and welfare information about your cat from Vetlexicon Felis.



Enucleation

Enucleation is the term given to describe the removal of an eye. This may seem like a drastic thing to do but there are several indications why it might be the best course of action for your pet. These might include the following eye conditions:

- Glaucoma (high pressure within the eye)
- Severe inflammation or infection
- Tumors/cancer
- Severe trauma

When is removal of the eye necessary?

If an eye is blind and is not painful then its removal is not usually necessary. However, if the eye is blind and painful with no hope of vision being restored then it should be removed on welfare grounds. In addition, if there is a suspected tumor of the eye then removal might be

advised if there is a concern it could spread to the rest of the body.

How will I know if my cat's eye is painful?

It is usually quite obvious if an animal's eye becomes suddenly painful. They may rub at the eye or face, blink more than normal, be averse to bright light, the eye might have a discharge, or it may appear red and/or swollen. If the eye becomes gradually painful, however, then the signs of discomfort can be difficult to notice. Examination by your veterinarian or an ophthalmologist can provide more clues as to whether the eye is likely to be causing your pet discomfort.

What does the operation involve?

To perform the operation the animal must have a general anesthetic. The hair from around the eye is clipped and the whole eye is removed along with the eyelids. Following this the skin is stitched together. The animal may be sent home with a short course of antibiotics and painkillers but the patient is usually quite comfortable following the procedure. The area is likely to appear bruised and swollen for a week or so and may have a slight blood-tinged discharge either from the wound or from the nostril for a few days. The operation site is checked approximately 10 days later and if any skin sutures are present, they may be removed at this point. The long-term cosmetic result following an enucleation is usually quite good. There will be a slight depression over the area where the eye was removed although this may not be noticeable particularly if the pet's hair is long.

It is usually recommended to send the eye away to a laboratory to be checked for the cause of the disease. This is important as the findings might have implications for the other eye or for the rest of the patient's health.

Are there any complications?

Potential complications of enucleation are unusual but include infection or cyst formation. If

the area appears particularly hot, painful, swollen or has a discharge then you should contact your veterinarian immediately.