

Blue Haze in Dog's Eyes: Alarm Bells or False Alarm?

A startling blue glow in your senior dog's gaze may raise concerns, but is it a cause for panic? Delve into the eye condition affecting aging pets, why it happens and how it differs from more serious issues.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Lenticular sclerosis, also known as nuclear sclerosis, results in a bluish, cloudy appearance in older dogs, particularly those aged 6 and over
- Lenticular sclerosis is a normal condition in aging pets' eyes; it affects the lenses but doesn't cause any pain or blindness
- The condition comes on gradually, which allows pets to adjust well to any minor vision changes that may occur
- It's important to distinguish lenticular sclerosis from cataracts, which can take on a similar blue-cloud appearance
- While lenticular sclerosis shouldn't interfere with your pet's well-being, cataracts may need treatment to prevent permanent vision loss

Have you noticed that your older pup's eyes have taken on a bluish haze? It's likely lenticular sclerosis, also known as nuclear sclerosis — and it's not a cause for alarm. The good news is lenticular sclerosis won't make your dog go blind.

But it's important to distinguish the condition from cataracts, another relatively common condition in aging pets. Cataracts can take on a similar blue-cloud appearance, but may need treatment, especially if your pet's vision is affected.

What Is Lenticular Sclerosis?

Lenticular sclerosis is a normal condition in aging pets' eyes, particularly those aged 6 years and older. It affects the lenses but doesn't cause any pain. Typically appearing simultaneously in both eyes, lenticular sclerosis comes on gradually, which allows pets to adjust well to any minor vision changes that may occur.

In younger animals, the lens is transparent due to organized tissue fibers. However, with age, additional fibers accumulate in the outer rings of the lens. Because the lens is confined within a capsule and unable to expand, the influx of new fibers pushes older fibers closer together toward the center, resulting in lens hardening and cloudiness. As Whole Dog Journal reported:¹

"The lens is a dynamic structure made up of fibers within a capsule. Over time, old fibers degenerate and new fibers are laid down. Because the fibers are encased in a firm capsule and have nowhere to go, the older more central fibers get compressed, making them denser and less transparent. This is what creates that bluish haze, which usually affects both eyes equally."

If your dog is 6 or older and his eyes have a cloudy, bluish grey appearance, lenticular sclerosis is the likely reason why. However, a trip to your veterinarian or veterinary ophthalmologist can put your mind at ease to ensure something more serious isn't going on. Most veterinarians can quickly tell the difference between lenticular sclerosis and another condition, like cataracts, with an ophthalmologic exam.

The Difference Between Lenticular Sclerosis and Cataracts

With lenticular sclerosis, your pet may develop minor problems judging distance and range. "He or she will likely not see subtle things like your facial expressions as clearly and will likely not navigate as confidently in low-light situations," Whole Dog Journal explained.² But, overall, vision won't be significantly affected.

This isn't always the case with cataracts, which can progress very slowly over many years or can come on very quickly, leading to blindness within a few days or weeks. Cataracts form a blue cloud of varying degrees inside the capsule that holds the lens of the eye and are often inherited. They can also be caused by diabetes, toxicity from drugs and pest preventives, another underlying eye disease, trauma to the eye and nutritional deficiencies in puppies.

While cataracts are seen more often in older dogs, they may occur at any age and aren't considered a "normal" part of the aging process like lenticular sclerosis. These abnormal opacities in the lens can vary in severity, ranging from small, insignificant opacities to large, dense cataracts that cause significant vision loss. If left untreated, cataracts can lead to blindness.

If your dog is diagnosed with cataracts, less severe cases will be monitored regularly to watch any progression. In some instances, anti-inflammatory eye drops may be prescribed. However, if your pet's vision is impaired, their quality of life is affected or the cataracts are advancing rapidly, surgery may be recommended to restore vision.

When you see your veterinarian, corneas are typically checked first, often using a device called a slit lamp. If there's cloudiness on or just behind the cornea, the problem is not lenticular sclerosis. When your vet looks deeper into the eye with an ophthalmoscope, which may require the use of medicated drops in your pet's eyes, he or she will be able to see all the way through to the retina if lenticular sclerosis is present.

If the problem is a cataract, it will partially or completely block the view of the retina. If your vet can't see through the lens, neither can your pet. Beyond cataracts, several other conditions can also cause **bluish eyes in dogs**, including glaucoma and corneal dystrophy. So be sure to see your veterinarian to get a proper diagnosis.

5 Tips to Ward Off Lenticular Sclerosis in Dogs

While you likely can't prevent lenticular sclerosis entirely, you can slow down its progression by taking steps to support longevity and avoid premature aging. This includes:

1. Maintain your pet's physical fitness and ensure they **maintain a healthy weight**.

2. Avoid over-vaccination and unnecessary medications, including pest preventives, to minimize exposure to potentially harmful substances. Opt for natural, chemical-free household cleaners and shampoos in your home, as well.
3. Provide a diet rich in DHA/EPA and antioxidants, preferably through a minimally processed, whole food diet that hasn't been high-heat processed. Vitamins C and E are particularly beneficial for scavenging free radicals and slowing degenerative changes in your pet's eyes.
4. Incorporate bilberries into your pet's diet, either in supplement form or as part of their raw food. Bilberries are rich in flavonoids and antioxidants, and when combined with vitamin E, they can protect eye tissue and prevent lens clouding.
5. Consult with a holistic veterinarian to explore additional supplements that can support your pet's ocular health, such as beta-carotene, lutein, astaxanthin, glutathione, super oxide dismutase (SOD), carnosine and resveratrol (knotweed). Additionally, discuss the potential benefits of nutraceutical eye drops and Chinese herbs known for their effectiveness in slowing lens degeneration.

It's important to recognize that your dog's eyes provide insight into their overall health, and many chronic conditions may cause symptoms in the eyes. If you observe any abnormal eye changes, from discoloration to discharge, consult your veterinarian right away to get it checked out and address any underlying health concerns.

Sources and References

^{1,2} [Whole Dog Journal January 6, 2024](#)
