

Keep an eye on those eyes!

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As the weather gets nicer and the horses go out, more flies are around and we tend to see more eye problems. Examples are swelling of the eye, tearing at the corner of the eye, squinting of the eye or wounds to eyelids or the eye itself. The problems can be related to infection, injury, the bright sunlight or can even be hereditary (inherited or auto-immune conditions).

Conjunctivitis

Conjunctivitis is inflammation of the lining of the eyelids (the so called conjunctiva), eyes can be swollen, red and discharge can be seen to emerge from the corner of the eye. Conjunctivitis is more commonly seen when more flies are around as they irritate the conjunctiva and can spread infection. Treatment often consists of antibiotic eye drops to stop the infection. It can be prevented by turning horses out with an eye mask.

Uveitis

Uveitis is inflammation of the iris and related structures and can be very painful. Signs of this disease are squinting of the eye, mild discharge and a very constricted (small) pupil. Treatment is aimed at stopping the inflammation and relaxing the constricted pupil. As this disease is very painful and can cause long-term damage to the eye it is crucial that treatment is started as soon as possible. Uveitis is usually an auto-immune condition or can be caused by a bacteria known as leptospira spp.

Corneal ulcers

A corneal ulcer is a defect of the superficial layer (cornea) of the eye that can be caused by trauma to the eye, such as, rubbing of the eye, sand in the eye, or scratching of the eye by with a foreign object such as a branch of a tree. It is diagnosed by staining of the eye with fluorescein, and the defect will be colored green (as can be seen in the picture). Antibiotic drops and artificial tears are commonly used to treat these ulcers.

Injury of the eye

Injury of the eye can be caused by blunt force (such as a kick) or sometimes by a laceration. Therefore it is important that after an accident to the face the eye is thoroughly checked too. Sometimes the trauma can be obvious, but sometimes the initial injury looks very minor; however their still may be damage to the eye, so it is important to get it checked out.

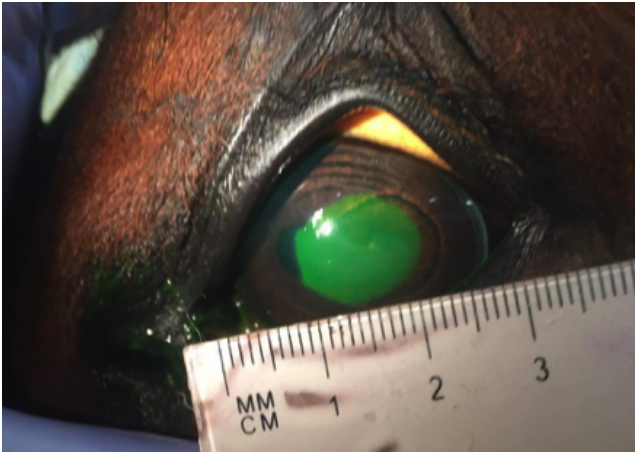


Figure - This horse has a large ulcer, obtained after he injured his eye on electrical tape. As treatment was started immediately the ulcer resolved within a week.

Besides these common problems other issues can occur to all structures of the eyes. It is good to remember that eye problems can deteriorate rapidly. It is key to call your veterinary surgeon within 24-48 hours after problems arise. Most problems can be treated successfully when treatment is started promptly. So keep an eye on those eyes!