

Hey Neighbor



For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

Prompt care of eye injuries essential

Eye injuries in horses require immediate attention.

"Because horses have large, prominent eyes on the side of their head, they are more prone to eye injuries than other domestic animals," admitted Dr. Tom Lenz, Kansas City equine veterinarian.

"Only two to three days are required for some eye injuries to become sight-threatening. Therefore, it is critical to recognize the early signs that accompany injuries and seek prompt medical attention," Lenz said.

Eye injuries can result from dirt, sand and rocks thrown into the eye when horses are running, and eyes can be scratched by hay stems, weeds or tree limbs. Injuries also occur when a horse makes a sudden head movement coming

in contact with a trailer, nail or other hard object.

"Because the cornea almost entirely fills the space between the eyelids, corneal ulcers and lacerations are some of the most common eye injuries," he explained.

Inflammation, pain, swelling, redness and excessive tears accompany eye injuries and can lead to cloudiness of the cornea and sometimes long-term scarring.

"Old timers referred to cloudy eyes as moon blindness which is medically called *equine* or inflammation of the inside of the eye. It can clear up or get much worse," Lenz said.

However, it is essential that owners not apply any medications to the eye before a veterinarian makes an examination. The medi-

cine could interfere with diagnosis. Old ointments might be contaminated with bacteria that could cause infection if applied to a newly injured eye.

"Diagnosis of a cornea ulcer is made by applying stain to the eye," Lenz said. "Ulcers and abrasions will retain the stain, while the normal cornea will not."

Culture swabs can be used to determine if bacteria have infected the injured eye and may be used to determine the appropriate treatment. "Infection can be controlled with topical or injectable antibiotics and anti-inflammatories.

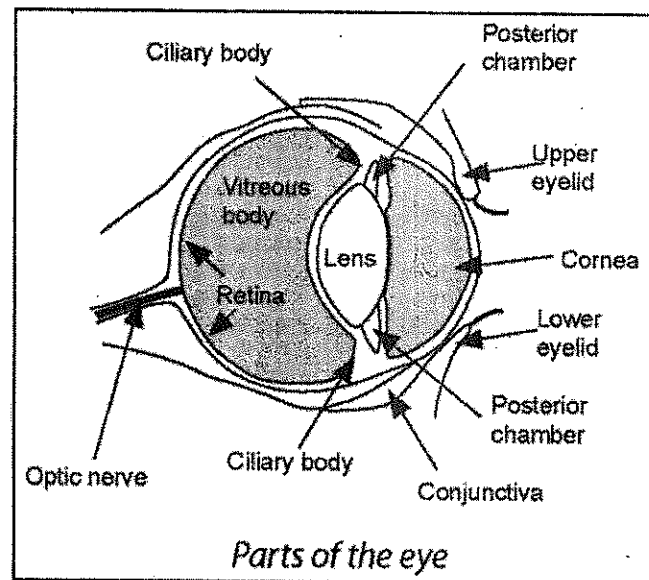
Ointment is placed in the eye to dilate the pupil, which prevents adhesion formation in the iris and relieves pain. Because some ointments like atropine will dilate the pupil, the horse must be out of direct sunlight for several days," the veterinarian added.

Aggressive treatment is required four to six times a day. The injury can heal or worsen quickly and should be re-evaluated by a veterinarian within a couple of days.

Horses' eyes can easily be cut and if the injury is not too severe, a veterinarian can suture the cornea. "The eyes can often be saved, but there is sometimes reduced vision," Lenz said.

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Parts of the horse's eye are shown here. It's easier to check a horse's eyes out of direct sunlight. By placing the horse in the shade, or in a stable, conditions are better for observing any abnormalities.

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ian noted that many horses that have limited vision, only have one eye or are completely blind, can still serve useful purposes.

"It's not uncommon for a horse to get along well with one eye," Lenz said. "Horses usually only look out of one eye most of the time anyway."

Horses can actually see almost 360 degrees, with only a small area in front of their nose and behind the tail that can't be seen.

"When both eyes or bifocal vision is being used by a horse, he actually sees objects as three-dimensional, whereas objects appear flat if the horse is using one eye. That accounts for why a horse will spook and shy sometimes when they turn

their head," Lenz said.

There have been top horses in many events including roping, barrel racing and pleasure that have vision in only one eye. Some completely blind horses have been used successfully in team hitches, and blind mares will produce and raise foals.

"The main thing with blind horses is that the environment can not be changed. If a gate is usually open and is closed, or a fence is placed where there wasn't one, that's when problems occur," Lenz added.

Most eye injuries can have successful outcomes if examined immediately. "Eye injuries are emergencies, and recovery is proportionate to the speed of the treatment."

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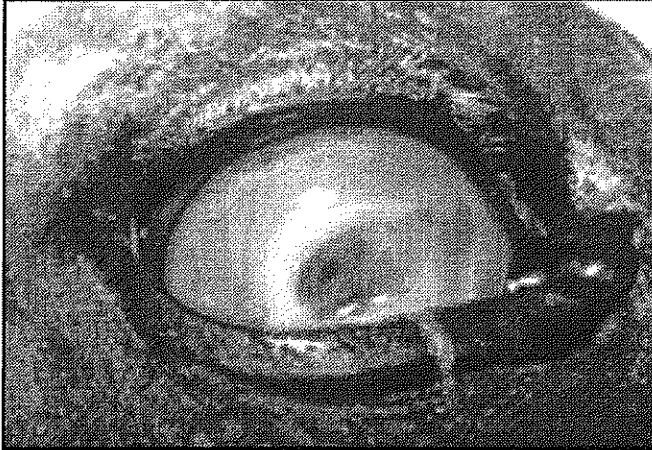
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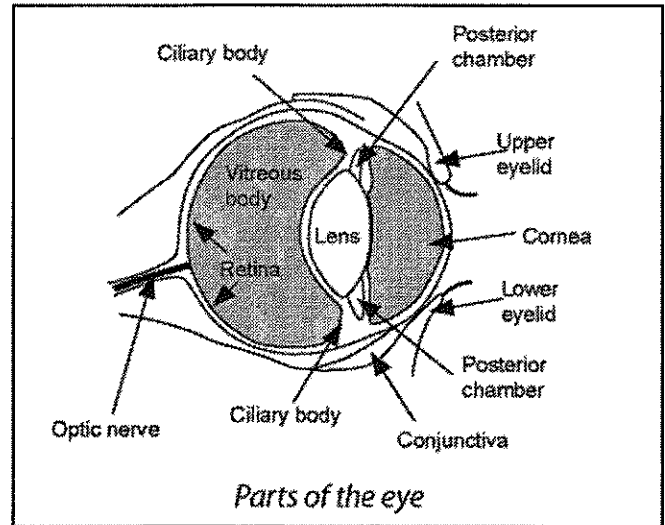
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Most eye injuries can have successful outcomes if examined immediately. "Eye injuries are emergencies, and recovery is proportionate to the speed of the treatment," the veterinarian concluded.



Corneal ulcers are common in horses. They can be caused when foreign objects such as dirt or hay get into the eye and can also occur when a horse hits the eye. Immediate treatment is essential.



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