

Comfort Procedures

Frequently Asked Questions

Why the need for comfort procedures?

In Veterinary Ophthalmology we have two goals: vision and comfort. In situations where your pet is blind with painful eye disease and we are no longer able to offer options for vision, we seek to restore comfort. Depending on your pet's condition, there are three options for long-term comfort: enucleation (eye removal), chemical ciliary body ablation (CBA), or intraocular prosthesis.

Together, we'll choose the best option depending on your pet's eye condition, their health, and your preference.

Enucleation

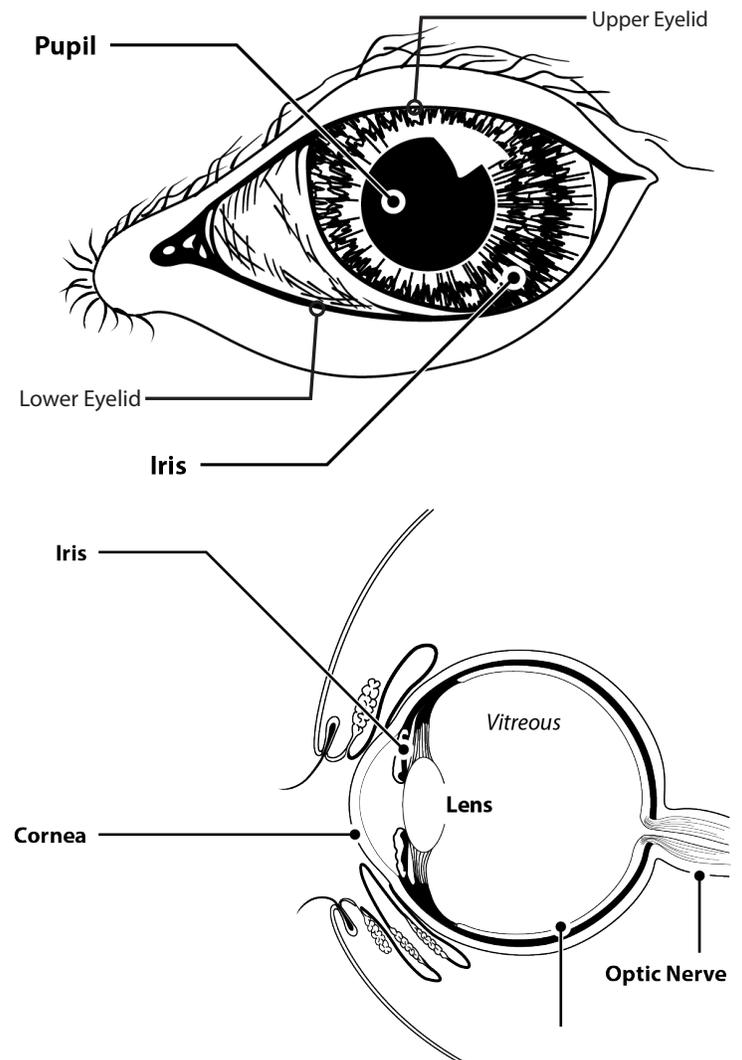
This procedure entails removing the entire eye and permanently closing the eyelids over the orbit (the area where the eye was located). This procedure requires general anesthesia and typically takes less than 20 minutes to complete. Your pet will require oral medications and should wear an E-collar for 10-14 days until suture removal. Most patients are quiet the day of surgery but begin acting more like themselves within a day or two.

The pro of this procedure is that comfort is restored almost immediately and once sutures are removed, it will not require any future care. Additionally, complications such as infection and mucocele (fluid filled mucous cyst) rarely occur.



The complication rate of this procedure is less than 1% when completed by an ophthalmologist.

Cons of the surgery are quite minimal but include the need for anesthesia which, on average, carries a risk of 1 in 10,000 patients. Thankfully surgery time is short and we are equipped with the same anesthetic monitoring devices as that of a human hospital, helping to minimize the risk. There will be some sinking in of the skin over the orbit with time in most cases. We may offer to place a silicone rubber ball behind the eyelids and within the orbit to help reduce the depression of the skin if this is a concern. The complication rate of the rubber ball is under 5% and includes rejection, infection, and migration.



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Chemical Ciliary Body Ablation (CBA)

This procedure is only recommended if your pet is suffering from glaucoma. It is completed by injecting a medication into the back chamber of the eye (vitreous), which results in ablation or destruction of the fluid producing cells (ciliary body) of the eye. In most patients, the injection can be completed without anesthesia or sedation. The damage to the ciliary body reduces fluid production and therefore reduces eye pressure. 80% of dogs who undergo this procedure will have long-term control of glaucoma. Additionally, most patients will experience a shrinking of the globe, and in 5-10% of patients the globe will shrink quite significantly.

The damage to the inside of the eye affects not only the fluid producing cells but other structures such as the lens, retina, and inner layer of the cornea (endothelium). This damage will often result in cataract formation, slight hazing of the cornea, and in some cases a retinal detachment.



Immediate complications are rare but include the development of blood within the eye or a hematoma at the injection site. Long-term complications are infrequent but include the development of dry eye (low tear production), inflammation, and corneal ulceration.

The pros of this procedure are lack of need for anesthesia and the continued presence of an eye. The cons of the procedure are our inability to control the outcome of the physical appearance, 80% success rate, and the continued need for veterinary care. Although doctor and patient dependent, CBA can often be performed without the need for general anesthesia.

About VEI

Veterinary Eye Institute (VEI) is the leading veterinarian owned and led network of stand-alone ophthalmology practices dedicated to making the world a visually clear and comfortable place for pets. VEI offers complete medical and surgical eye care for dogs, cats, horses, small mammals, and exotic pets.

To learn more about VEI's services and team or to find a location near you, visit veterinaryeyeinstitute.com.

Intraocular Prosthesis

This procedure is best if you are having a difficult time with the thought of your pet no longer having an eye and is more cosmetic in nature. It should be noted that this procedure is typically not offered to those patients with ocular tumors, corneal perforations, corneal infections, or severe dry eye.

The surgery is completed by making an incision on the top of the eye itself and removing all of the intraocular structures. A silicone rubber ball is placed inside the eye, and the eye is then sutured closed to keep its normal shape. The procedure usually takes 20-40 minutes and requires general anesthesia. Your pet will take 2-5 days to recover from surgery and will be required to wear an E-collar. They will receive oral and topical eye medications for 10-14 days to prevent infection, control inflammation, and reduce pain. In rare cases, some pets can be uncomfortable for up to two weeks post-operatively. Complications of the procedure include the development of a corneal ulcer or dry eye (low tear production).



The final appearance of the eye varies depending on the degree of corneal scarring. In some cases, the eye will appear as an almost normal darkly pigmented eye. Others can appear very scarred and grey, while others can be a combination of the two. There is no way for us to know prior to surgery what the final appearance will be.

The pro of this procedure is that the eye will remain present and be comfortable. The con of the procedure is the need for general anesthesia and the potential need for continued care as eye tissue is still present.