



UVEITIS

Uveitis is inflammation of the uvea, which is a delicate structure of the eye, and when inflamed, can be painful. It can occur as a single episode caused, for example, by trauma to the eye, and might never create future problems. But if it keeps recurring, it is known as equine recurrent uveitis (ERU).

ERU is a condition diagnosed in the equine eye that can potentially cause blindness (commonly called 'moon blindness'). There is no gender or age predisposition for ERU, but Appaloosas, warmbloods and draft breeds are overrepresented among horses diagnosed with ERU. It can affect one or both eyes and diagnosis is based on characteristic clinical signs.

Most common clinical signs:

- Closed eye – pictured on the right (especially in bright sunlight), swollen or red eye
- Ocular discharge (usually watery)
- Cloudy appearance of the eye – pictured on the left



Treatment

The goal of treatment is to reduce inflammation and pain and to prevent blindness.

Topical medication includes steroid eye drops, that are used to decrease inflammation of the eye, and atropine eye drops, which are usually used to reduce intraocular pain and to help dilate the pupil. Along with the eye drops, systemic anti inflammatories, such as 'Finadyne', 'Bute' or 'Danilon', are usually recommended as well to improve comfort levels.

As ERU is aggravated by sunlight, it is important to keep horses away from this. UV eye masks are highly recommended at all times and sometimes UV goggles are also recommended during ridden work (picture below).

When topical medication does not work or if episodes of uveitis keep recurring, there are some surgical procedures that can be done, such as a suprachoroidal cyclosporin implant. In this procedure, medication is put into a specific part of the eye and it is released for around 3 years after implantation.

If topical medication and/or surgical procedures do not work and horse is not comfortable, eye enucleation (removal of the affected eye) is a possible treatment option. Horses can adapt really fast after having an enucleation.

