Conjunctivitis in Dogs

It is not only humans which get rather sniffily during these warmer months – our little furry friends can too! At this time of the year, we are seeing an increase in dogs (and cats) with mucky eyes.

What is conjunctivitis?

The conjunctiva is a thin membrane that covers the eye, and its purpose is to act as the eyes protective barrier against foreign objects (from pollens / dust / irritants / grass seeds) and infection. Dogs, unlikely humans, also have a third eyelid in the inner corner of the eye, which is also covered by conjunctiva.

Conjunctivitis refers to inflammation of this tissue. When this occurs, the conjunctiva becomes red and swollen. It is often that this inflammation starts at one eye but quickly spreads to the other one. The most common clinical signs of conjunctivitis include green/yellow/cloudy discharge, squinting, increased blinking, and pawing/rubbing at the eye.

Notable green discharge from eye.

Most commonly, especially in puppies, the top 3 causes of conjunctivitis are bacterial, viral or allergic. There are a multitude of other causes, from foreign objects stuck in the eye or even a blocked tear duct.

A full eye exam is warranted to investigate the cause.

How is it treated?

As there are many things that can cause conjunctivitis, it is recommended that a full examination is done by a vet. This will help determine the cause of the problem so the appropriate treatment is started. In most cases, an eye medication would be recommended – from particular washes, lubrication, or medicated eyedrops. Some dogs may also require oral medications to help with the swelling, from anti-inflammatories, antibiotics, or antihistamines.

Can I get conjunctivitis from my dog?

Very unlikely! However, there have been eye transmission from roundworms from dog to human from the eyes.

Will my dog recover from this?

Most dogs will recover fully, however the earlier you bring them in when you notice the problem, the better the outcome. Complications from conjunctivitis can lead to permanent vision problems or scarring of the eye!

It is important to never use eyedrops from a previous visit, as this can make the problem significantly worse! Please contact your veterinarian if you have any questions.

Stay well, Dr Alex