**“Dry Eye”**

**What is “Dry Eye”?**

* Also known as Keratoconjunctivitis sicca or KCS
* Occurs when the eye does not produce enough tears to coat the eye
* In most cases, both eyes are affected

**What are the Causes?**

* Most common is immune mediated, meaning the immune system attacks the tear producing glands, reducing their function.
* Trauma
* Chronic eye infections
* Reactions to certain medications
* Low thyroid hormones

**What are Typical Signs with “Dry Eye”?**

* Redness or inflamed eye
* Squinting and discomfort (rubbing or pawing at eye)
* Green or yellow thick discharge (eyes attempt to make up for lost moisture)
* Secondary abrasions or ulcers to cornea (clear “window” of the front of the eye)
* Cloudiness or pigmentation of cornea, which in advanced cases leads to blindness.

**How is it Diagnosed?**

* Schirmer’s tear test: A small strip of paper is held against the eye that wicks up the tears produced. The amount of tears soaking the paper during one minute is measured to see if tear production is adequate
* Application of a fluorescent green dye or fluorescein to detect scratches or abrasions to cornea

**What is the Treatment for “Dry Eye”?**

* Cyclosporine or Tacrolimus are most often prescribed, topical medications placed within the affected eye.
  + It slows the immune system’s attack on the tear producing glands. This medication is typically continued for the life of your pet.
* Use of an artificial tear product or lubricating drop may be recommended to replace the tear film.
  + The following over-the-counter products have been recommended: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Antibiotics drops or ointment may be used if a corneal ulcer or an eye infection are diagnosed.

**How is it Managed Long Term?**

* KCS is a chronic disease, meaning continues indefinitely. In most cases there is no cure. Most dogs, with medication given as prescribed at home, can maintain normal vision.
* It may be helpful if different medications are being applied to prepare a chart to track treatments. Give at least 5 minutes spacing between medications if given at the same frequency.
* Clean discharge from around the eyes using warm moist compresses to soften the material.
* Keep long hair trimmed from around the eyes and face.
* Watch for any worsening signs, such as increasing redness, squinting, or persistent discharge. Call if this occurs.
* Do not stop any medications prescribed even if the eyes improve without consulting with our office. A relapse can occur easily.