

# INSIGHTS

NEWS AND VIEWS *from*  
Dr. Heather Brookshire, DVM, DACVO



ANIMAL  
VISION  
CENTER  
*of* VIRGINIA

WHY CHOOSE US | SERVICES WE OFFER | CONDITIONS WE TREAT | REFERRING VETS

*WINTER EDITION : January 2016*

## From the Desk of Dr. Brookshire

Welcome to *Insights*! We hope 2016 is off to a good start and that you are on track with any resolutions you may have made. At [Animal Vision Center of Virginia](#), we have resolved to bring you the latest information on eye-related issues that could affect your patients or pets. On that note, each edition of our e-newsletter will carry a medical veterinary focus. This quarter, we'll take a look at cataracts, one of the most common conditions affecting the eyes of dogs. You can also read about our new Friday afternoon "Lunch & Learn" series which kicks off Friday, March 11 and look at some of the animals I examined recently at The Virginia Zoo. Please let us know what you think of *Insights*. And if there are any medical issues or stories you'd like us to cover in future issues, please send a note to me at [Dr.Heather@AVCVA.com](mailto:Dr.Heather@AVCVA.com).

Cheers,  
*Dr. Heather Brookshire*



## FOCUS on: Cataracts

Cataracts result from disease processes affecting the lens of the eye, causing it to lose its transparency and resulting in impaired vision. It's often found in dogs due to genetics and is more common in certain breeds of

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## Lunch & Learn

The Animal Vision Center of Virginia will kick off the first of our quarterly Lunch & Learn series on March 11 at 1:00 p.m., at our Virginia Beach office. These accredited Friday afternoon continuing education sessions are open and free of charge to veterinarians and veterinary staff members. During our first program, we'll look more in depth at cataracts, including how to counsel your clients on the various types of cataracts and what to expect with surgery. We hope you can join us! Please RSVP no later than Friday, Feb. 26 to [Dr.Heather@AVCVA.com](mailto:Dr.Heather@AVCVA.com).

**On the Road with the**

dogs, including Boston Terriers, Poodles, American Cocker Spaniels, Schnauzers, Siberian Huskies, as well as Labrador, Chesapeake Bay and Golden Retrievers. Cataracts can also result from [diabetes mellitus](#), trauma and toxic causes, inflammation in the eye (known as uveitis) and with advanced age. Cataracts may progress slowly or rapidly, depending on the underlying cause and may lead to minor or severe secondary complications within the eye.

### **Treatment**

Recently in the realm of ophthalmology, a lot of talk is circulating about drops that can dissolve cataracts in dogs. Generally, these drops are in the form of antioxidants, anti-glycation molecules (molecules that remove sugar bonds from proteins) or other proteins found naturally in the lens. Drops have been formulated with antioxidants N-acetylcystein and glutathione; combinations of glycation inhibitors carnosine, aminoguanidine and aspirin; and the lens protein lanosterol.

So far, studies on these medications have lacked appropriate peer review and structured evaluation under the guidance of a veterinary ophthalmologist. Also, none of these formulations have been approved by the FDA and have a great deal of testing before this could occur. The overwhelming consensus among veterinary ophthalmologists is that the evidence is still lacking for any of these formulations. The only current documented cure for cataracts at this time is complete surgical removal.

### **What Happens During Surgery**

Cataract surgery in dogs is very similar to cataract surgery in people. First, a small incision is made at the top part of the eye between the clear cornea and the white sclera. Then, the eye is entered and a small circular hole is created within the capsule of the lens. (Think of the lens like an M&M with an outer candy coating/capsule and an inner chocolate filling/lens protein). Ultrasound energy, or phacoemulsification, is used to break up and suck out all of the abnormal cloudy lens protein. The capsule is then polished, and an artificial acrylic lens is implanted within the natural lens capsule. Finally, the incision at the top of the eye is closed with very small suture material, the thickness of a piece of human hair. Because the suture is so small and fragile, we ask that the dog wear an Elizabethan collar or cone to prevent inadvertent trauma to the surgical site for the first 7-10 days following surgery.

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### **AVCVA**

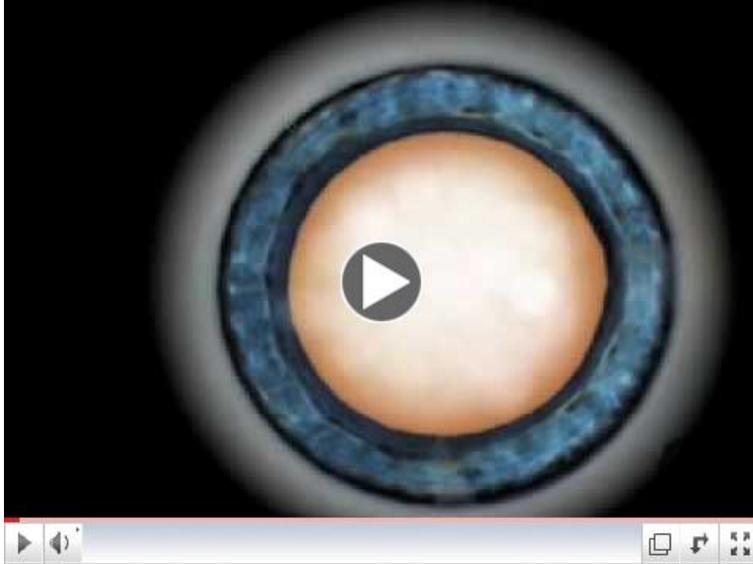
While we love seeing pet patients in our office, it's also rewarding to go off site to treat animals where they live. In December, Dr. Heather had the pleasure of conducting eye exams on a variety of animals at The Virginia Zoo. She's seen here checking the peepers on a Screech owl named Arrol and a corn snake. During the screening, she also examined a wallaby, a red-tailed hawk and got to meet "Mateo," the friendly resident prehensile-tailed porcupine.



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### **Meet the Staff**

We have a great team on staff here at the Animal Vision Center of Virginia, and it is our pleasure to introduce you to:



*ACVO Cataract, You and Your Pet*

### **Cataracts Warning Signs**

If any of the warning signs listed here are noted, it's time to have the pet's eyes examined for cataracts: Eye redness, swelling, discharge, cloudiness, squinting, bumping in to objects around your home.

### **How We Screen for Cataracts**

At the Animal Vision Center of Virginia, we conduct cataract screenings by using a slit-lamp biomicroscope and indirect ophthalmoscope (+/- tonometry to measure the pressure in the eye) to assess the grade or severity of the cataract. This helps to determine the individual predisposition to secondary complications from the cataracts and whether medical therapy is recommended to treat and/or prevent painful complications. We also will be able to assess whether the pet is a candidate for surgery, if the owner wishes to restore vision.

### **Learn More**

To learn more about cataracts and the issues that surround treatment, check the [Cataract Surgery Information](#) page on our website and view this informative [video](#), provided by the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists. To schedule an appointment for a cataract screening, please call us at 757-749-4838.

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## **Ophthalmic Emergencies Lecture, Feb. 9**

If you are interested in learning about ophthalmic emergencies, please join the AVCVA and Animal Emergency Center for a special program on Feb. 9 from 1-2 p.m. Dr. Heather Brookshire will review the keys to diagnosis and treatment of the five most common ophthalmic emergencies: corneal ulcers, glaucoma, lens luxation, proptosis and orbital cellulitis/abscess. The lecture will take place at Animal Emergency Center, 2025 George Washington Memorial Highway, Yorktown, VA 23693. Lunch will be provided. Please RSVP to [Dr.Heather@AVCVA.com](mailto:Dr.Heather@AVCVA.com) or call 757-



### **Ashley Pierce, Veterinary Assistant**

Ashley grew up in Chesapeake, where she graduated from Hickory High School (go Hawks!). She has loved animals since an early age and grew up surrounded by dogs, cats, horses and rabbits, and she has ridden horses competitively since age six. With an extensive background in emergency and critical care, Ashley has worked in veterinary medicine for 11 years. She is currently in school to become a licensed veterinary technician. Her interest in ophthalmology began when her cat Chloe was diagnosed in 2012 with a condition that left her completely blind. Ashley now resides in Norfolk with her husband Luke, two-year-old son Jacob and Chloe. Her goal at Animal Vision Center of Virginia is to make every pet and owner feel that they are treated like family.

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## **What Our Clients Say**

"A wonderful center that has a warm and pleasant atmosphere and people who really care." - Brent M.

ANIMAL VISION  
CENTER *of* VIRGINIA

521 Old Great Neck  
Road, Suite 2  
Virginia Beach, VA

757-749-4838

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HOURS OF OPERATION

749-4838.

Monday - Friday  
9:00am - 6:00pm

Every Other Saturday  
10:00am - 2:00pm

Find us on Facebook | Visit our Website | Send us an Email | Call us at 757-749-4838



**ANIMAL  
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of VIRGINIA**

*Providing quality ophthalmic care for animals of all shapes and sizes, Animal Vision Center of Virginia is owned and operated by Dr. Heather Brookshire, a board-certified veterinary ophthalmologist.*

*The Center is located at 521 Old Great Neck Road, Suite 2, in Virginia Beach, VA 23454.*

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