

Eye Testing

Why do we need to eye test our dogs?

There are many types of eye issues within dogs but hereditary eye issues (either those present at birth or those that develop later in life) can have serious effects on the health and welfare of your dog, potentially causing pain, blindness, or the need for lifelong medication.

The Kennel Club strongly recommends all its assured breeders and, anyone looking to breed to undertake eye testing prior to breeding and the British Veterinary Association recommends similarly. Whilst the Samoyed, in general, does not have serious issues with eye problems, the Samoyed breed clubs recommend that eye testing should be completed as well to ensure that the breed continues to be relatively free of eye problems.

What sort of things are looked at in an eye test?

There are two types of eye test the standard eye test and, also something called a gonioscopy.

The standard eye test checks out the health of the eye in all areas but also will pick up things such as

- hereditary cataracts
- entropion (a condition in which the eyelid (usually the lower lid) folds inward. It is very uncomfortable, as the eyelashes continuously rub against the cornea causing irritation. Entropion is usually caused by genetic factors)
- Ectropion (a condition in which the eyelid folds outward).
- Distichiasis (a fairly common condition where eyelashes develop in an abnormal location emerging from the eyelid margin rather than the skin. It is recognised as hereditary).

The gonioscopy is the other test which is worth undertaking as this is the main test for primary glaucoma which is a hereditary disease. It is a painful and blinding disease associated with high fluid pressure in the eye. It results from a reduced drainage of fluid that is produced within the eye resulting in a build up of fluid pressure within the eye which in turn leads to pain and blindness. The gonioscopy identifies dogs at risk of developing this issue.

How is a gonioscopy performed?

This is performed by a veterinary eye specialist by applying local anaesthetic drops to the eye. A special lens is placed on the surface of the cornea to examination of the drainage angles to be completed. It is then performed on the other eye.

How is a standard eye test performed?

A veterinary eye specialist will place drops in your dog's eyes to dilate the pupils to enable them to make a detailed examination of the eye. The examination normally takes about 5 to 10 minutes, but the drops required to dilate the pupils take about 20 minutes to take effect.

Are there other eye conditions which can affect samoyeds?

The short answer to this is yes. Probably the most common of these are:

- X-linked Progressive Retinal Atrophy (this is an adult onset condition generally diagnosed between 3-5 years old. It starts off as difficulty seeing in low light but as the disease progresses leads to complete blindness. There is a DNA test for this available).
- Corneal ulcers which are very common in Samoyeds, particularly as they age. These can prove difficult to heal and will require antibiotic drops or possibly something called debridement where the surface of the eye is rubbed to force healing.
- Dry eye again fairly common in Samoyeds. This is where tear production is reduced causing scarring and ulcers on the eye and it also can be a side effect of a diabetic dog. If your dog has dry eye it may be worth ensuring the vet checks for diabetes.
- Cataracts due to diabetes. Diabetic samoyeds often go blind, and it can happen very quickly, sometimes overnight. In other cases, the cataracts can be slow to form. It is quite possible to have cataract surgery so that sight can be restored. Please see diabetic factsheet for further details.

How will I find out the results?

For the standard eye test the veterinary eye specialist performing the examination will put his/her findings on the eye certificate which is handed to you after the examination and will explain the findings to you.

For the gonioscopy, dogs are graded between Grade 0 and Grade 3. Grade 0 means the dog is unaffected i.e. the drainage angles are normal and is highly unlikely to develop glaucoma. Grade 1 means the dog is mildly affected and is unlikely to develop glaucoma. Grade 2 is moderately affected – there is a low risk of developing glaucoma whilst Grade 3 is severely affected and at the highest risk of developing glaucoma.

The results from the eye tests will be sent to the BVA and will be recorded on the dog's records at the Kennel Club with effect from the start of 2021.

How do I book an eye test?

Eye tests have to be completed by a BVA appointed eye specialist. To find the nearest specialist to you follow the link below

[:https://www.bva.co.uk/canine-health-schemes/eye-scheme/find-an-eye-panellist/](https://www.bva.co.uk/canine-health-schemes/eye-scheme/find-an-eye-panellist/)

You then make an appointment with them to examine your dog's eyes as part of the BVA eye scheme.

When attending the examination, you need to take along your dog's registration certificate.

How much does an eye test cost?

A routine eye examination starts from £60.

Gonioscopy will be about the same i.e. £60 unless you get it done at the same time as a routine eye examination in which case it will be approximately £54.

Repeat gonioscopy is usually less.

Is the eye testing a one off?

The short answer to that is no. It used to be thought that eye conditions did not change after birth in relation to the drainage angles which are checked in the gonioscopy, but recent research has provided evidence of change with age. As a consequence, the advice on gonioscopy has been updated to being performed every 3 years ideally. The Kennel Club also advise that a valid eye test certificate should be obtained before mating. Since the current standard eye test certificate (from 2020) has a 12 month life span, the standard test should be completed as well. However, it is worth noting that unless you are planning to mate your Samoyed you are not required to test every 12 months or 3 years, but as mentioned above, further testing should be undertaken before mating your Samoyed so that it has a valid eye test certificate and gonioscopy certificate.

What should I see if I am buying a puppy?

If you are purchasing a puppy your breeder will provide you with a copy of the certificates for both parents within the puppy pack. You can also check the eye test results for yourself on the KC Health test results finder. To access this please follow the link below:

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/search/health-test-results-finder/>.

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