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**Cataract Surgery for Dogs**

**Definition:** A cataract is any focal or diffuse opacity of the normally transparent lens. Cataracts are commonly caused by inherited defects of the lens, metabolic disorders (most commonly diabetes mellitus), or traumatic injuries. Many cataracts progress in one or both eyes to cause vision impairment or blindness. There are no known medical treatments to slow the progression or reverse cataract change, and surgery is the only known treatment in animals. Successful surgery provides a return of vision.

**Scheduling a consultation:** The ophthalmologists at VCA Northwest Veterinary Specialists can evaluate your pet for cataracts and assess whether surgery is recommended. Please call 503‐656‐3999 to schedule an appointment. An initial consultation is required prior to scheduling cataract surgery for your pet.

**Pre‐anesthetic work‐up:** Cataract surgery involves general anesthesia, and we require all patients to have pre‐anesthetic bloodwork, which can be completed the day of the procedure. Any patient with concurrent medical problems should have a physical examination and bloodwork with his/her general practitioner prior to surgery. Specifically, diabetic patients need to have a cbc, chemistry panel, and urinalysis performed no earlier than one week prior to surgery. Please consult with your general practitioner to schedule these tests.

**Surgery:** The patient is admitted to the hospital the morning of surgery. The procedure is performed under general anesthesia, using an operating microscope and ultrasonic surgical device. The lens is removed by ultrasonic fracture and in most cases an artificial intra‐ocular lens (IOL) is placed. Vision with an IOL is better at all distances, but vision is still useful without an IOL. The patient typically remains in‐hospital the night following the procedure for post‐operative monitoring and the patient goes home the following day.

There are two ancillary tests that may be recommended for your pet prior to surgery: an ocular ultrasound and an electroretinogram (ERG). An ocular ultrasound examines the inner structures of the eye looking for any problems that may decrease the success of cataract surgery. An ERG assesses the electrical function of the retina. If the retina is not functional, then cataract surgery is not recommended. Performing both procedures however, is at the discretion of the ophthalmologist and neither may be recommended for your pet.

**Post‐operative care:** Dogs can develop significant inflammation after surgery; however this typically improves with intensive post‐operative treatment. Your pet will be treated with both oral and topical antibiotics and anti‐inflammatory medications. Your pet will need to wear an e‐collar, and activity should be limited and non‐strenuous for the first two weeks following surgery. Rechecks for uncomplicated cataract surgery are typically at 1 week, then every 2‐4 weeks for up to 3 months, then every 3‐6 months thereafter. The success rate of uncomplicated cataract surgery is approximately 80% for long‐term vision. Post‐operative concerns may include excessive inflammation, glaucoma (increased eye pressure), and/or retinal detachment. These complications can lead to vision loss and/or pain. Both consistent post‐operative treatment and follow‐up examinations are crucial to achieve the best results.

**Cost:** We will provide you with a detailed estimate for the cost of cataract surgery after the initial consultation. Surgical cost depends on the individual needs of the patient.