



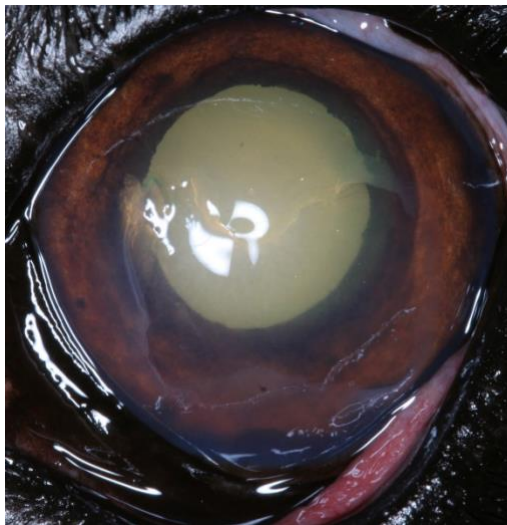
Spontaneous Chronic Corneal Epithelial Defects in Dogs

Spontaneous Chronic Corneal Epithelial Defect (SCCED), also called an indolent or Boxer ulcer, is a superficial corneal ulcer that is slow to heal. The problem is not that the ulcer is deep or infected, but that the surface layer of the cornea (the epithelium) does not adhere (attach) properly to the underlying tissue due to an abnormal surface layer called a hyaline membrane. As a result, the ulcer can persist much longer than an ordinary superficial ulcer and may remain uncomfortable. Certain breeds, including Boxers, French Bulldogs, and Shih Tzus, are more commonly affected, but SCCED can occur in any middle-aged dog.

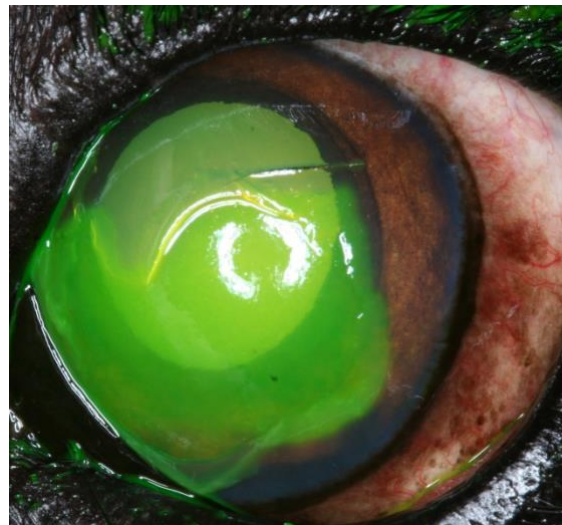
Healing rates are variable. Many dogs heal well after treatment, but some take longer and need more than one procedure. This does not necessarily mean anything has gone wrong. Some breeds, including French Bulldogs, Samoyeds, and Corgis, can be slower to heal.

Diagnosis

SCCED is diagnosed from its characteristic appearance and by using a green stain called fluorescein dye, which highlights the ulcer and the loose epithelium (like skin) at the edges.



Before fluorescein staining



After fluorescein staining





Treatment Options for SCCED

Eye drops help with comfort and infection prevention, but they do not usually make a SCCED heal by themselves. There are two main procedural treatment options.

- **Diamond burr debridement**

This is our most common first-line treatment. A diamond burr is a small, gently rotating instrument used to remove the loose abnormal surface cells so that healthier cells can regrow and attach properly. We usually perform this under sedation. A drop of atropine is often given, so the pupil may stay dilated for about 2 days afterwards. A soft contact lens may also be placed to improve comfort.

Diamond burr debridement is often chosen first because it is less invasive, less costly than surgery, and heals about 80% of SCCEDs. If the ulcer is still fluorescein positive at recheck, the procedure may be repeated.

- **Superficial keratectomy**

This is another very good treatment option. It involves surgical removal of the abnormal outer corneal tissue under general anaesthetic, precisely using an operating microscope. It is more expensive than diamond burr debridement, but healing rates are higher, approaching 100% in many cases. It can also be chosen as a first-line treatment, particularly where a more definitive approach is preferred.

What should I expect?

Healing takes time (usually two weeks), and improvement is not always immediate. Some SCCEDs heal after one procedure, while others require repeat treatment or surgery. During healing, the eye may still look red, watery, or slightly cloudy, and the cornea may develop some white or gray change. Dogs are often more comfortable before the ulcer is fully healed.

Home care

Continue the prescribed eye drops exactly as instructed. Topical antibiotics are commonly continued after the procedure. A buster collar is not usually needed, but it is advisable if your dog is rubbing at the eye.

If a contact lens has been placed, it may fall out. This usually does not matter, as it is mainly there to improve comfort rather than to speed healing.

When should I worry?

Please contact your vet, or us, if the eye becomes significantly more painful, develops thick yellow or green discharge, changes suddenly in appearance, or seems to be getting worse rather than gradually better.

What is the outlook?

The outlook for SCCED is generally good, but patience is often needed. Many ulcers heal after diamond burr debridement, while others require repeat treatment or superficial keratectomy.

It is important to attend follow-up appointments with your own vet or with us, so that healing can be monitored. If there are any concerns, or if the ulcer is not healing as expected, further treatment may be recommended. If you have any concerns about your dog's eye health, please contact your vet or us for advice.

