



## Corneal Sequestrum in Cats

A corneal sequestrum is an area of dead corneal tissue. It usually appears as a brown, black or dark amber plaque on the surface of the eye, most often on medial cornea. Some are quite superficial, while others extend more deeply. They are common in cats and can be mildly irritating or quite painful.

### Why it develops

Corneal sequestra usually develop because of ongoing corneal irritation. Contributing factors can include brachycephalic conformation, entropion, hairs rubbing on the eye, poor tear film distribution, corneal exposure, previous ulceration, chronic keratitis, feline herpesvirus infection, and trauma.



In many cats there is more than one factor involved. Some also have entropion or another eyelid abnormality contributing to the problem. If so, this may need to be corrected to give the eye the best chance of healing and to reduce the risk of recurrence. Persian, Himalayan, Exotic and other brachycephalic cats are particularly prone, but any cat can be affected.

### Natural course

Some small, superficial sequestra will eventually loosen and separate with medical management alone, but this often takes many weeks or months. During that time the eye may remain sore.

There is also a risk that the sequestrum becomes deeper instead of lifting away. If that happens, the cornea can become dangerously thin and may perforate. In severe cases the eye can rupture and emergency surgery, including enucleation (eye removal), may be needed.

### Treatment

**Medical treatment** may be reasonable if the sequestrum is small, superficial and the eye is comfortable. This usually involves lubrication, topical antibiotic treatment if needed, and pain relief where appropriate. Medical treatment is mainly aimed at keeping the eye comfortable while monitoring for change.

**Surgery** is often the better option, especially if the sequestrum is deep, the eye is sore, or the problem has been present for some time. The sequestrum is removed under general anaesthesia using an operating microscope in a procedure called a keratectomy. Depending on the depth of the defect, a conjunctival graft, corneal graft, or another flap procedure may be needed to support healing.

If entropion or another eyelid problem is contributing to the corneal disease, **corrective eyelid surgery** may be recommended at the same time, in one or both eyes. Surgery usually gives the quickest and most reliable resolution, rather than waiting months to see whether the sequestrum separates on its own.





### **Aftercare**

The eye will need medication during healing, and follow-up examinations are important. A buster collar is usually needed for around 7 to 10 days, sometimes longer depending on the procedure and the cat. The eye often remains red for a while after surgery, particularly if a graft has been placed, and some corneal scarring is expected, which gradually fades over time (3-6 months).

### **Recurrence and outlook**

Most cats heal well, but recurrence is possible. Another sequestrum may develop in the same eye or the other eye, either soon afterwards or months to years later. This cannot be predicted accurately.

The outlook is generally good if the problem is treated in time. Most cats are much more comfortable once the sequestrum has been removed. The final appearance of the cornea depends on how deep the sequestrum was and whether grafting was needed, but the main aim is to preserve a comfortable eye.

