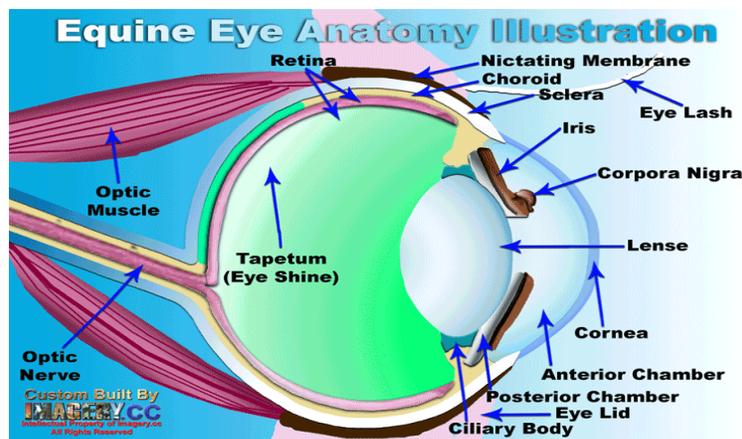


Equine Recurrent Uveitis

*Equine Recurrent Uveitis (abbreviated ERU) is a condition of the eye and a common cause of blindness in horses. It affects the uveal track which is comprised of the iris, ciliary body and the choroid (see figure below). Appaloosa horses are the most commonly affected, although it can occur in any breed. The cause of disease can differ horse to horse, but it is thought to have an immune-mediated pathogenesis. A number of infectious agents have been implicated as a cause of ERU including bacterial, viral and/or parasitic infections. Infection with *Leptospira interrogans* is often implicated in the immune-mediated process associated with ERU. *Leptospira interrogans* is a bacteria that can cause infection via exposure to infected urine or urine-contaminated water/feed.*



Courtesy of Google images.

Signs of uveitis can be subtle and go unnoticed at first. A horse may start to show signs of increased tearing, squinting and be ultra sensitive to light. This may progress to a cloudy eye caused by corneal edema, decreased pupil size, and even cataract formation. In severe cases, glaucoma can develop as a result of the prolonged inflammation. Blindness is often the end result of ERU, however it can be prevented in cases where it is caught and treated aggressively early in the disease process.

Treatment starts with an accurate diagnosis by your veterinarian. In addition to examining the eye, your veterinarian may recommend other diagnostics such as serologic testing for infectious agents (may be useful as a prognostic indicator). Once a diagnosis of ERU has been made, treatment is often aggressive at first and may be carried out for weeks to months. It may involve a combination of topical antiinflammatories and/or immunosuppressive medications and atropine (dilates the pupil and decreases spasmodic pain within the eye). Systemic medications such as phenylbutazone or flunixin meglumine (banamine) and antibiotics (Doxycycline in the case of a horse with high leptospira titers) are also recommended. In horses where treatment is not an option or in which the level of discomfort cannot be adequately controlled, surgical removal (enucleation) of the eye may be recommended.

As is stated in the name of the disease, ERU has a tendency to recur and once diagnosed in one eye, may eventually affect the other eye. Knowing the warning signs and acting promptly will give your horse the best chance at preserving their vision and the health of their eye(s). Please contact our office for more information on ERU or to set up an appointment to have your horse evaluated.