

Veterinarian cautions against using unnecessary over-the-counter drugs

October 23 2014, by Lindsey Elliott

If your small dog or cat has discoloration around the eye, be cautious when using over-the-counter medication to clear it up, according to a Kansas State University veterinarian.

Recently, the Food and Drug Administration issued warning letters to companies manufacturing unapproved animal drugs to remove tear stains on dogs and cats. These products include Angels' Eyes, Angels' Glow, Pets' Spark, Glow Groom and Health Glow.

Jessica Meekins, ophthalmologist at the Veterinary Health Center at Kansas State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, says tear stains are often simply a cosmetic issue.

"Tear stains are the brown discolorations that occur in the hair around the eyes and are more prominent in dogs that have lighter color fur," Meekins said. "A poster child for this cosmetic issue is the white-faced dog, such as a poodle or Maltese."

In a normal dog, the tears that are produced at the surface of the eye are whisked away into the tear duct and drained into the nose and back of the throat. In some dogs, there is a conformational issue where the tear duct openings at the inner eyelid margins are pinched off or partially blocked. Instead of the tears flowing normally down the tear duct, they spill over the surface of the eyelid and stain the hair around the eye. These openings are normal and don't cause a medical issue in the animals, Meekins said.

"Concerns about staining are a common problem we deal with at the ophthalmology department, and it's truly almost always a cosmetic issue," Meekins said. "Tear staining by itself does not cause a health problem. That's why I do not recommend using these manufactured products purchased over the counter as the main ingredient in them is often an antibiotic. Tear stains are not significant enough to risk giving antibiotics to your pet; antibiotics should be reserved for use in bacterial infections, and tear staining is not related to an infection."

Alternative products like wipes are available, but Meekins says these are not 100 percent effective. It is also important to remember that a variety of eye problems can lead to excessive tearing, and some dogs are born with abnormalities in the [tear duct](#) formation that can be evaluated and possibly corrected. She says It's best to consult a veterinarian before using any product on your pet.

Provided by Kansas State University

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