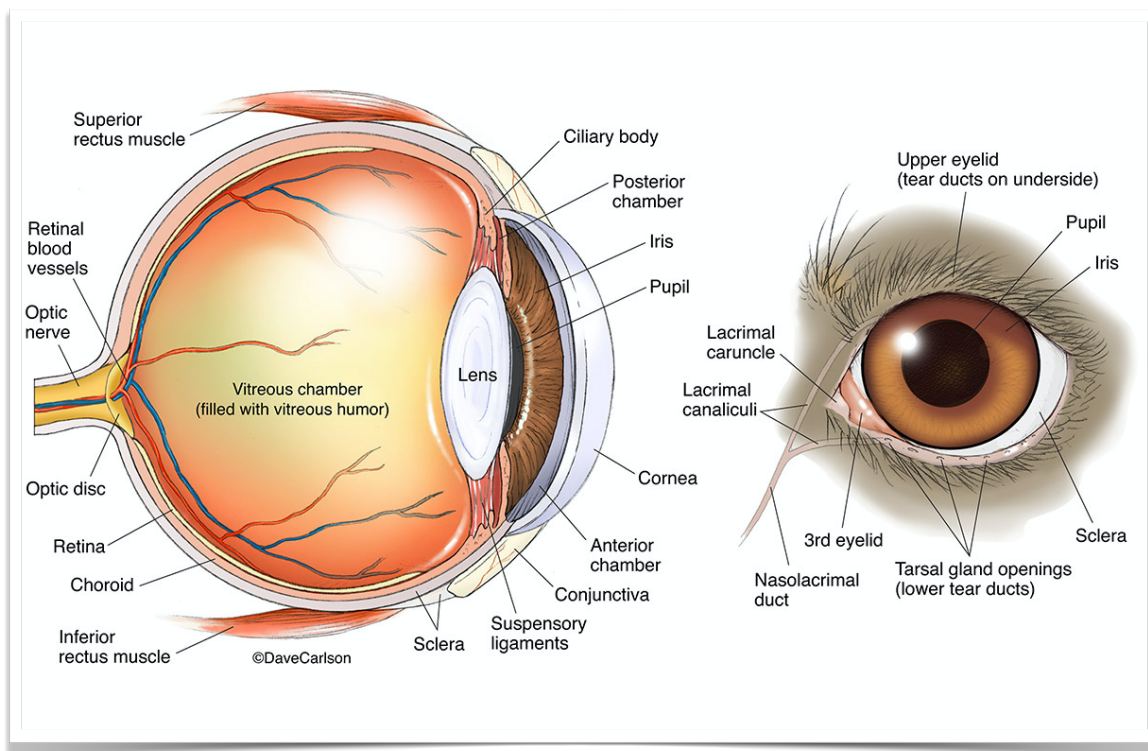


SARDS

Sudden Acquired Retinal Degeneration Syndrome



What is SARDS?

Sudden acquired retinal degeneration syndrome (SARDS) is a poorly understood syndrome that results in retinal degeneration (loss of function) that has only been reported in dogs.

Typical clinical features of this syndrome include acute (sudden) vision loss associated with dilated, unresponsive pupils. Although the vision loss is acute, many dogs will show some behavioral changes such as increased thirst and urination, increased appetite, and/or weight gain. These behavioral changes can be present up to several months prior to the loss of vision. These symptoms are similar to those of an endocrine condition called hyperadrenocorticism (Cushing's syndrome). Most SARDS patients do not have Cushing's syndrome and these symptoms often abate over the following months.

VISION LOSS

A sudden onset of complete or partial vision loss.

DILATED PUPILS

Both pupils are usually widely dilated and do not respond to light stimulation.

INCREASED THIRST

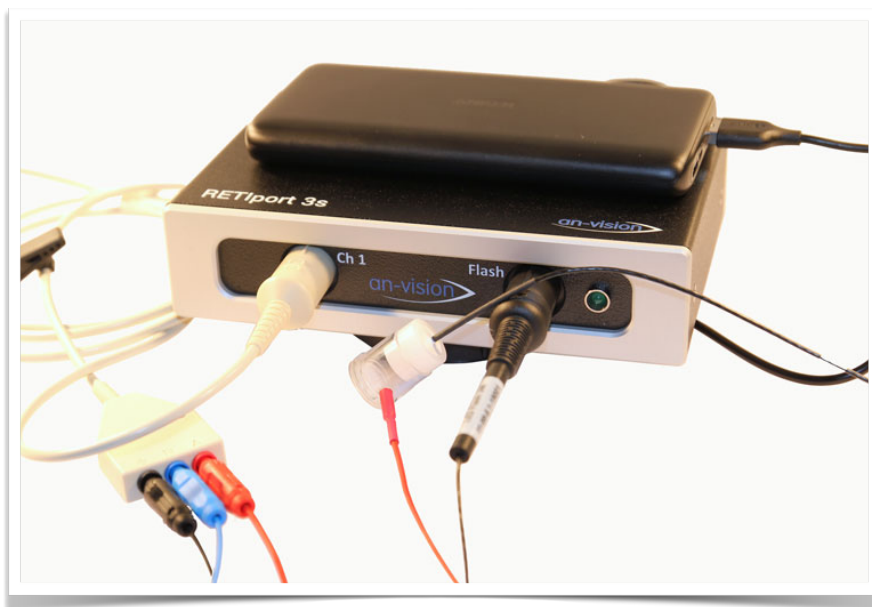
Dogs may show some behavioral changes such as increased thirst and urination, and weight gain.

How do we diagnose SARDS?

SARDS can occur in any breed of dog.

The disease occurs most commonly in middle-aged adult dogs with overweight and spayed females being overrepresented. Initially the ophthalmic examination will appear normal with the exception of dilated, unresponsive pupils. Although the initial eye examination appears normal, visible signs of retinal degeneration often become apparent over the next several months. Your veterinary ophthalmologist can perform a diagnostic test called an electroretinogram (ERG) which will measure the electrical activity of the retina. A lack of a response will confirm a diagnosis of SARDS. Performing an ERG is important to rule out more severe and potentially treatable neurologic conditions like optic neuritis.





How is SARDS treated?

Unfortunately, there is currently no clinically proven treatment for SARDS. There is extensive clinical research and funding into this condition, but the cause has yet to be discovered. Thankfully, this is not a painful condition and this syndrome does not lead to any other ocular or systemic health problems over time. Some therapies have been proposed to prevent further vision loss, but these therapies remain unproven and controversial.

Most owners report that their dogs adapt very well over a few weeks to months

What is the prognosis for SARDS?

The prognosis for regaining vision in dogs with SARDS is poor and the loss of vision is permanent. Some dogs will maintain a low degree of vision which may remain long term. Although there is a longer adjustment period for dogs with sudden vision loss when compared to dogs with gradual vision loss, most owners report their dogs adapt very well over a few weeks to months. Your veterinary ophthalmologist can provide guidance on how to aid your pet's adaptation to their change in vision. Dogs are not as reliant on vision as humans and usually maintain an active and good quality of life after vision loss.

Resources for Blind Dogs:

Living With Blind Dogs: A Resource Book and Training Guide

By: Caroline D. Levin

Tips & Suggestions To Help Your Blind Dog

www.blinddogs.net

Blind Dog Stories: Tales of Triumph, Humor, and Heroism

By: Caroline D. Levin

