



DISTRIBUTION OF THE EYE DISEASES IN DOGS: A SINGLE-CENTER RETROSPECTIVE STUDY FROM 2021 TO 2024

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Summary

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Despite the growing demand for dogs for companionship and security, there is only one report for eye diseases, connected with uveitis in dogs. There are no other surveys for diagnosis of eye diseases, documented in Bulgaria. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the incidence of ophthalmic affections in dogs brought to the University Veterinary Hospital in Trakia University in Stara Zagora over a four-year period (2021–2024). Out of 36,022 clinical cases of dogs with various conditions, ocular pathology was diagnosed in 999 (2.77%) of the examined patients. Eye disorders affected more male than female animals. The dogs in the oldest group, more than 8 years of age, were more frequently affected. From the registered 70 breeds with ophthalmic pathology, the most commonly affected breed was the French Bulldog with a rate of 9.6 %, followed by Yorkshire Terriers (9.4%), Pinschers (8.9%), and mixed breed dogs (6.1%). The most prevalent ocular affection was the cataract (14.5%), followed by cornea ulceration/corneal wound (13.9%), conjunctivitis (10.9%) and keratitis/keratoconjunctivitis (9.6%).

Key words: Bulgaria, cataract, dog, French Bulldog, ocular pathology

INTRODUCTION

Ocular diseases are an important part of small animal practice because the eye problems in domestic animals are getting increasingly important (Tamilman *et al.*, 2013; Niranjana *et al.*, 2023; Sharun *et al.*, 2024; Bonea *et al.*, 2025). The eye is very sensitive to external factors and diseases (Kahn, 2007). Congenital or acquired ocular and palpebral diseases are frequently encountered in dogs (Narfstrom, 1999; Hohenhaus, 2023; Srirakonon *et al.*, 2023; Giannakopoulou & Black-

lock, 2025). In some cases, systemic diseases can be clinically manifested with eye pathology. Early and prominent ocular findings can be observed in all infectious, neoplastic, autoimmune, nutritional, toxic, and metabolic diseases (Şirin *et al.*, 2023). The eye is a very sensitive organ and its function may be affected even with a mild disturbance of its homeostasis, following direct injury or other local or systemic diseases. Studies of ocular affections may provide information on the prevalence of

ocular diseases and also help the treatment (Kumar *et al.*, 2018; Gupta *et al.*, 2024; Patil *et al.*, 2025).

Despite the growing demand for dogs for companionship and security, there are other surveys on the prevalence of eye diseases in Bulgaria except for one report on uveitis in dogs (Krastev, 2015). Therefore, this study was planned to assess the current status of ocular problems in dogs in the country.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data collection

The current retrospective study included information from the medical records of dogs, presented at the University Veterinary Hospital of Trakia University in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria between 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2024. For the purpose of the study the gathered information included the dog breed, age when the ocular pathology was detected, the gender and the diagnosis.

Diagnostic tests

The same strict order of ophthalmic examination was followed for all patients (Nedev & Simeonova, 2018). After obtaining a complete history, functional or neuro-ophthalmic tests were performed. When was necessary, animals were sedated using an age- and disease-specific protocol. If pupil dilation was necessary, atropine sulfate 10 mg/mL (Atropine Vision, Balkanpharma, Bulgaria) drops were used. Shirmer tear test-I (Schirmer tear test strap with blue band, FioniaVet, Denmark), fluorescein staining (Fluorescein Sodium Ophthalmic Strips U.S.P. Tarun Enterprises, India), tonometry (TonoVet, iCare, Finland), slit-lamp biomicroscopy (LED SLIT XL-1, Ohira

CO., Japan), direct (ri-mini, Riester, Germany) and indirect ophthalmoscopy (Video omega 2c, Heine, Germany), B-wave ocular ultrasonography (Vetus 50, Mindray, China) and electroretinography (ERG-jet, Nicolet Biomedicals, USA) were performed in all dogs. Information for affected eye(s) was obtained in each case.

Ethical considerations

The handling of animals during the ophthalmological examination was gentle and secure in order to reduce stress to an absolute minimum and to protect the veterinarians. Examination of patients was performed after signing a standard informed consent form by the owner which contains a clause authorising the use of signalment and/or clinical data gathered during the procedures by the hospital's academic staff for research purposes. The access to patient data is allowed by the Manager of the University Veterinary Hospital of Trakia University respecting the full anonymity of the owner's name, address and phone number.

Statistical analysis

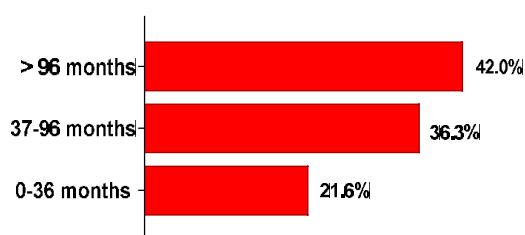
All data were recorded and analysed with MedCalc Statistical Software version 15.8 (MedCalc Software, Ostend, Belgium). Data for incidence rate, breeds, age and sex are expressed as number/ percentage and comparisons were performed with the chi-square test.

RESULTS

During the period of four years, a total of 36,022 clinical cases of dog with various conditions were evaluated. Out of these patients, 999 were with ocular affections. The total percentage of dogs with eye diseases was 2.77% of all presented.

Table 1. Percentage distribution of dogs with eye pathologies for the four-year study period

| Year | Number of patients with ocular disorders/total number of patients | % from all affected dogs | % from dogs affected with ocular pathologies |
|-------|---|--------------------------|--|
| 2021 | 247/6278 | 3.93 | 24.7% |
| 2022 | 318/9090 | 3.50 | 31.9% |
| 2023 | 215/10266 | 2.09 | 21.5% |
| 2024 | 219/10388 | 2.11 | 21.8% |
| Total | 999/36022 | 2.77 | 100.0% |

**Fig. 1.** Percentage distribution of ocular diseases in studied age groups; $P=0.0103$ between 37-96 m and > 96 m; $P<0.0001$ between 0-36 m and 37-96 m; $P<0.0001$ between 0-36 m and >96 m.

Changes in the number of affected animals over the four-year period are presented in Table 1. Significantly more affected animals were found in 2021 and 2022, compared to 2023 and 2024 ($P<0.0001$). Out of 999 dogs with eye disorders, 462 (46.2%) were female and 537 (53.8%) were male ($P=0.0193$ between affected males and females). In terms of diagnosis, significantly more male dogs were affected with conjunctivitis ($P=0.0002$), corneal ulceration ($P<0.0001$) and panophthalmitis ($P=0.0442$) than females.

The dogs were divided into three age groups. The majority of the ophthalmic pathologies were recorded in the oldest group (96 months and older) – 42.2%, followed by those aged 37–95 months (36.3%) and 0–36 months (21.6%) (Fig. 1). The youngest group was significantly more commonly affected with cherry eye

($P<0.0001$) than the others. Middle-aged animals were significantly more often presented with foreign body in the cornea ($P=0.0006$) and entropion ($P<0.0001$) in comparison to the oldest dogs. The oldest group of dogs had a significantly greater prevalence of cataract ($P<0.0001$), dry eye ($P<0.0001$), glaucoma ($P<0.0001$) and progressive retinal atrophy (PRA) ($P<0.0001$) than the other age groups.

The dog breeds affected with eye pathologies were 70 (Table 2). The most frequently diagnosed breed with ocular pathologies was the French Bulldog with a rate of 9.6%, followed by the Yorkshire Terrier (9.4%), the Pinscher (8.9%), and mixed breed dogs (6.1%).

Regarding the type of ocular lesions (Table 3), the most common diagnosis out of registered cases was the cataract (14.51%) (Fig. 2), followed by cornea ulceration/corneal wound (13.9%) (Fig. 3)

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Table 2. Breed-associated prevalence of ocular pathologies in dogs

| | Breed | Number | % | | Breed | Number | % |
|----|-------------------------------|--------|------|----|----------------------------|--------|------|
| 1 | French Bulldog | 96 | 9.6% | 37 | Lagoto | 5 | 0.5% |
| 2 | Yorkshire Terrier | 94 | 9.4% | 38 | Malinois | 5 | 0.5% |
| 3 | Pinscher | 89 | 8.9% | 39 | Bulgarian Shepherd | 4 | 0.4% |
| 4 | Mix breed | 61 | 6.1% | 40 | Boxer | 4 | 0.4% |
| 5 | American Cocker Spaniel | 56 | 6.0% | 41 | Zwergschnauzer | 4 | 0.4% |
| 6 | Cane Corso | 48 | 4.8% | 42 | Australian Shepherd | 3 | 0.3% |
| 7 | Pekingese | 38 | 3.8% | 43 | Border Collie | 3 | 0.3% |
| 8 | English Bulldog | 37 | 3.7% | 44 | American Bully | 3 | 0.3% |
| 9 | Pug | 37 | 3.7% | 45 | Dogo Argentino | 3 | 0.3% |
| 10 | Chihuahua | 36 | 3.6% | 46 | Laika | 3 | 0.3% |
| 11 | Jack Russell | 33 | 3.3% | 47 | Malamute | 3 | 0.3% |
| 12 | Pomeranian | 29 | 2.9% | 48 | Great Dane | 3 | 0.3% |
| 13 | German Shepard | 25 | 2.5% | 49 | Papillon | 3 | 0.3% |
| 14 | Cavalier King Charles Spaniel | 20 | 2% | 50 | Staffordshire Bull Terrier | 3 | 0.3% |
| 15 | Bicolor hound | 16 | 1.6% | 51 | Saint Bernard | 3 | 0.3% |
| 16 | Husky | 15 | 1.5% | 52 | Boston Terrier | 2 | 0.2% |
| 17 | Chow Chow | 14 | 1.4% | 53 | Kangal | 2 | 0.2% |
| 18 | Poodle | 14 | 1.4% | 54 | Bulldog | 2 | 0.2% |
| 19 | Maltese Bolognese | 13 | 1.3% | 55 | Weimaraner | 2 | 0.2% |
| 20 | Labrador Retriever | 13 | 1.3% | 56 | Dogue de Bordeaux | 2 | 0.2% |
| 21 | Spitz | 13 | 1.3% | 57 | Whippet | 2 | 0.2% |
| 22 | Akita | 12 | 1.2% | 58 | Caucasian Shepherd | 2 | 0.2% |
| 23 | Drathaar | 10 | 1.0% | 59 | Bernese Mountain Dog | 2 | 0.2% |
| 24 | English Pointer | 10 | 1.0% | 60 | Bull Terrier | 1 | 0.1% |
| 25 | Rottweiler | 10 | 1.0% | 61 | Dogo Canario | 1 | 0.1% |
| 26 | Beagle | 9 | 0.9% | 62 | Bloodhound | 1 | 0.1% |
| 27 | Shitzu | 9 | 0.9% | 63 | Japanese Chin | 1 | 0.1% |
| 28 | Golden Retriever | 8 | 0.8% | 64 | Mastiff | 1 | 0.1% |
| 29 | Kurtzhar | 8 | 0.8% | 65 | Yagdterrier | 1 | 0.1% |
| 30 | Pitbull | 8 | 0.8% | 66 | Newfoundland | 1 | 0.1% |
| 31 | Dachshund | 7 | 0.7% | 67 | Springer Spaniel | 1 | 0.1% |
| 32 | Shar Pei | 7 | 0.7% | 68 | Tibetan Mastiff | 1 | 0.1% |
| 33 | Breton Spaniel | 7 | 0.7% | 69 | Japanese Chin | 1 | 0.1% |
| 34 | Central Asian Shepherd | 6 | 0.6% | 70 | Shiba Inu | 1 | 0.1% |
| 35 | Samoyed | 6 | 0.6% | | Total | 999 | 100% |
| 36 | Bulgarian Hound | 6 | 0.6% | | | | |

Table 3. Ocular diseases in dogs diagnosed from January 2021 to December 2024

| Diseases | Number | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Cataract | 145 | 14.5% |
| Corneal ulceration / corneal wound | 139 | 13.9% |
| Conjunctivitis | 109 | 10.9% |
| Keratitis/keratoconjunctivitis | 96 | 9.6% |
| Entropium | 81 | 8.1% |
| Cherry eye | 77 | 7.7% |
| Uveitis | 55 | 5.5% |
| Glaucoma | 54 | 5.4% |
| Progressive retinal atrophy | 53 | 5.3% |
| Dry eye | 43 | 4.3% |
| Panophthalmitis | 40 | 4.0% |
| Blepharitis | 26 | 2.6% |
| Corneal foreign body | 21 | 2.1% |
| Lens luxation | 11 | 1.1% |
| Prolapsed eyeball | 8 | 0.8% |
| Corneal dystrophies | 7 | 0.7% |
| Microphthalmia | 7 | 0.7% |
| Ectopic cila | 6 | 0.6% |
| Descemetocele | 4 | 0.4% |
| Dermoid | 3 | 0.3% |
| Chalazion | 3 | 0.3% |
| Ectropium | 2 | 0.2% |
| Ablatio of the retinae | 2 | 0.2% |
| Eversio of third eyelid | 2 | 0.2% |
| Wound of the lids | 2 | 0.2% |
| Scleral cyst | 1 | 0.1% |
| Limbal insuficientia | 1 | 0.1% |
| Trichiasis | 1 | 0.1% |
| Total | 999 | 100.0% |

and conjunctivitis (10.9%). The percentage of dogs with cataracts was significantly higher than that of all other diseases except for corneal ulcers ($P < 0.0001$). Cases of corneal ulcers were significantly more common compared to all other diagnoses except for cataracts and conjunctivites ($P < 0.0001$).

DISCUSSION

In this study, the animals affected with ocular pathology for the four-year period were 2.77% from all presented dogs. Ak-

inrinmade & Ogungbenro (2015) reported 6.62% incidents with dog's eyes in Southwest Nigeria. In India, Tyagi (2009), recorded 8.96% of dogs with eye affection, Ramani *et al.* (2012) established 2.39% and Kumar *et al.* (2018) found 1.39% prevalence of eye disorders for a period of 1 year, in the same country. In another study, Uzunlu *et al.* (2020), found 1.8% prevalence among 5000 patients in the central part of Türkiye while Şirin *et al.* (2023) reported 35.92% affected dogs in the southwest part of the country.

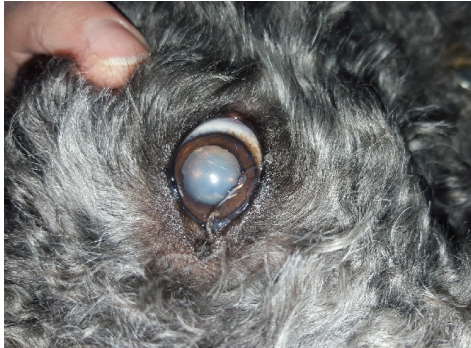


Fig. 2. Eye with cataract in an English Cocker Spaniel.



Fig. 3. Corneal ulceration in a Pekingese after fluorescein staining.

In the study of Akinrinmade & Ogungbenro (2015), ocular affections were more common in females (42.42%) as compared to males (35.49%). Tamilmahan *et al.* (2013) reported 60.32% male animals affected, comparing with 39.29% female, and Kumar *et al.* (2018) recorded a simi-

lar sex ratio, 65% male vs 35% female dogs. Pandey *et al.* (2018) presented a study with male-to-female ratio of 70.5%/29.5%. In our study the prevalence of diseases of the eye was significantly higher in male dogs. The reason could be the preference for male dogs as pets and aggressive behaviour which increases the risk of trauma to the eye (Antonia *et al.*, 2014; Das *et al.*, 2022; Raut *et al.*, 2023).

Kumar *et al.* (2018) and Akinrinmade & Ogungbenro (2015) commented on the age distribution of ocular disease, attributing the major part of them to the playful nature of puppies which make them more prone to traumatic injuries. On the other hand, the studies of Tyagi (2009) and Tamilmahan *et al.* (2013) reported increased incidence of eye illnesses in dogs more than 5 years of age (47.68%), followed by middle-aged animals. Pandey *et al.* (2018) found that the most of affected animals were between 6 and 10 years of age (47.54%) and the young ones, up to 5 years, were 20.49%. In our study, the group of dogs aged 8 years and older, was more commonly affected which can be explained by the fact that as the age advances, the regeneration of the epithelium slows down, thus increasing the chance of onset of various eye affections (Tamilmahan *et al.*, 2013).

In the present study, the most frequently affected breed was the French Bulldog (9.6%), followed by Yorkshire Terriers (9.4%), Pinschers (8.9%), and mixed breed (6.1%). In India, Sarangom (2012), Ramani *et al.* (2012), and Antonia *et al.* (2014) reported that Chinese Pugs was the more affected breed. Kumar *et al.* (2018) found Pugs (28.3%) to have the highest prevalence of ocular diseases, followed by mixed breed dogs (21.7%) and Labrador Retrievers (20%). Other breeds like the Spitz (15%) and the Ger-

man Shepherd (11.7%) had a high rate of ocular affections as well. In the same country, Pandey *et al.* (2018) reported mixed breed dogs (38.62%) as the most prone to eye pathologies, followed by Pomeranians (31.97%), Labrador Retrievers (13.93) and German Shepherds (4.91%). Southwest Nigerian researchers Akinrinmade & Ogunbenro (2015) evaluated breeds with ocular disease and found that the Alsatian breed was the most affected (22.08%), while other breeds e.g. Toy breed, Rottweiler, Boerboel and Mongrel were equally and moderately affected. In Türkiye, Uzunlu *et al.* (2020) established that the mixed breed dogs were affected most frequently with ocular disease (34.44%). In the same country, Terriers and mixed breed dogs suffered more from eye disorders with 13.87% each, followed by Golden Retrievers (10.5%), Kangals (10.22%), Pointers (6.57%) and Pekingeses (5.11%) (Deveci *et al.*, 2020). In the same study, the rate of affected Pugs was only 2.92%. Şirin *et al.* (2023) reported Golden Retrievers as the breed with greatest prevalence (82.3%) of ocular pathologies.

In terms of diagnosis, Kumar *et al.* (2018) reported the highest prevalence of pigmentary keratitis/keratoconjunctivitis (21.7%) and corneal ulcer/injury (21.7%) followed by corneal opacity (18.3%), epiphora (11.6%) and cloudy eye (8.3%). Deveci *et al.* (2020) found that the most common ocular diseases were conjunctivitis (17.91%), cherry eye (11.94%), keratitis (8.96%), entropion (5.97%), cataract (3.48%) and glaucoma (2.49%). Han *et al.* (2019) reported keratitis (34.17%) and conjunctivitis (31.29%) as most common ocular diseases. Antonia *et al.* (2014) demonstrated that the corneal ulceration (18.66%) was most common pathology of the eye followed by conjunctivitis

(10.73%), glaucoma (7.47%), cataract (6.48%), pigmentary keratitis (5.6%), cherry eye (5.28%) and entropion (0.5%). In a study conducted by Pandey *et al.* (2018) on the incidence of ocular diseases in dogs, cataracts (38.52%) were the most common, followed by corneal ulceration (13.11%) and glaucoma (4.92%). Şirin *et al.* (2023) found that the prevailing ocular pathologies diagnosed in dogs were senile nuclear sclerosis (36.5%), followed by cataract, corneal damage, glaucoma, and uveitis. In the present study, cataracts (14.51%) – one of the leading causes of vision loss worldwide in humans (Singh *et al.*, 2024) and dogs (Simeonova *et al.*, 2018; Du, 2024), was the most widespread ocular disease, followed by cornea ulceration/corneal wound (13.9%) and conjunctivitis (10.9%).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that cataract is the most prevalent eye disease in dogs in Bulgaria. French Bulldog is the most commonly affected breed with ophthalmic pathologies. Older dogs have significantly greater rate of eye affections compared with younger groups; male dogs were substantially more commonly affected than females.

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