



The Golden Retriever Club of America, Inc.

Introduction to Pigmentary Uveitis

Pigmentary uveitis, also known as Golden Retriever uveitis, is an important cause of blindness in Golden Retrievers. It was first described in the scientific literature in 2000 (Sapienza et al, 2000), but the GRCA Health and Genetics Committee (H&G) is aware of anecdotal reports which suggest it occurred well before this. The American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists (ACVO) listed pigmentary uveitis as a condition presumed to be inherited in Goldens beginning in 2001, which means that prior to that time, dogs diagnosed with pigmentary uveitis were eligible to receive CERF (Canine Eye Registry Foundation) numbers.

Uveitis

Uveitis is inflammation in the parts of the eye that normally contain the blood vessels, called the uvea, which includes the iris, ciliary body and choroid. Many things can cause uveitis, including infections, cancer, and autoimmune diseases. Blood, inflammatory cells, and clotting factors tend to leak from the blood vessels in affected eyes, and the disease may not only be painful, but may also cause serious secondary conditions including glaucoma, cataracts and blindness.

Features of Pigmentary Uveitis

Pigmentary uveitis is a specific form of uveitis that affects exclusively or almost exclusively Golden Retrievers. Unlike other forms of uveitis, pigmentary uveitis is not associated with any known systemic disease or underlying cause. It is typically a disease of middle-aged or older Goldens, with most diagnosed at five years old and beyond (ACVO, 2007). The Sapienza paper described an age range of 4.5 to 14.5 years old, and both eyes were involved in most cases. This paper also showed that pigmentary uveitis is often associated with iridociliary cysts, can cause cataracts, and frequently progresses to glaucoma, with 46% of the affected eyes becoming blind as a result of glaucoma.

Prevalence

Because pigmentary uveitis is often diagnosed at an ophthalmologist's office due to clinical symptoms instead of at well-dog eye screening clinics, many or most cases are not reported to a central database. Therefore, we currently do not have accurate incidence data, and this will be discussed further below. However, information from multiple sources indicates that this is a significant health issue in the breed. For example, 4 years of CERF data from 2008 thru 2011 showed that among Goldens over the age of 10 years that were presented for eye screening, 9.9% (76 affected out of 766 examined) were diagnosed with pigmentary uveitis. These figures are