Cataracts in Birds

Cataracts in birds have not been studied extensively, but in general terms cataracts have been shown to have many causes in the species which have been studied, such as human, dog, horse, etc.

Some of these causes include:

- Heredity: some cataracts are congenital (you are born with them), others, even the hereditary ones, can show up later in life. In these cases, it is not possible to prevent the development of cataracts, except to stop breeding animals known to carry this defect.
- Secondary to diabetes
- Secondary to infection in the eye itself
- Trauma
- Radiation including microwave and UV
- Lightning strike (survivors are at an increased risk of cataract development),
- and various toxins.

Symptoms:

- Cloudiness of the eye
- Impaired vision - a tendency to bump into things
- Reluctance to jump up onto objects
- Signs associated with diabetes, such as drinking and eating excessively, urinating more than usual
- Rubbing of / scratching at the eye / eye pain and discomfort

Note that not all cloudy eyes are symptomatic of cataracts. Older pets may suffer from nuclear sclerosis, which is a normal change of aging and does not impair vision. The two conditions can be easily distinguished by a veterinarian.

Tests the vet is likely to perform

- A complete medical history and physical exam to identify cataracts and rule out any other causes of ill health, including a routine blood tests for diabetes mellitus.
- Eye (ocular) exam: To differentiate between nuclear sclerosis and actual cataracts, as well as to determine the extent and severity of the cataract.
- Diagnostic tests may be carried out to see if the affected eye is still capable of vision.
Treatments

There is no medical treatment that prevents or cures cataracts. Surgical removal or ultrasonic dissolution of the cataracts should ONLY be performed if it is certain that vision can be restored to the eye.

Holistic Treatment:

Raw and Unprocessed Honey: May Berenbaum, Ph.D., a University of Illinois entomologist, shares that "Honey has been used for centuries to treat a wide range of medical problems like wounds, burns, cataracts, skin ulcers and scrapes," Various researchers worldwide are finding strong antimicrobial properties in some honeys. Please click on the above link for more information. (Ref. Health Benefits of Honey - Green and Healthy Website)

- **Note:**
  - I have not heard of anyone using raw honey to treat cataracts in birds. This should be discussed with a holistic veterinarian (or a regular veterinarian with knowledge of / training in holistic medicine). He or she may very well deem it worth a try ... Obviously, this would only apply to cataracts caused by some sort of infection.

Other Relevant Web Resources

- [Index of Bird Diseases](#)
- [Symptoms and Potential Causes](#)
- [Bird Health Care](#)
- [Glossary of Avian Medical Terms](#)
- [Medications Used in Avian and Exotic Medicine and Pharmaceutical Terms](#)
- [How to administer oral medications to a bird](#)

**NEED A VET?**

**USA:** [Find Your Local Avian Veterinarian](#)

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