

Hamster With Eye Trouble

What would cause a hamster's eye to become cloudy and sometimes not open?

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Q: My daughter purchased a Russian dwarf hamster from the local humane society approximately four months ago. Everything was well until recently when we noticed that her right eye looks cloudy/gray, and the skin around her eye appears to be pink. She sometimes has trouble opening her eye. She is otherwise active and eating. Her left eye appears normal (red in color).

Have you seen this type of problem before? What could be wrong?

A: What you are describing in your hamster sounds like a severe reaction to either an infection or trauma or maybe both.

The cloudy/gray appearance to the eye is likely a change in the appearance of the cornea. The cornea is the outside of the eye that we see. It is normally totally clear and allows light to enter through the pupil. When the cornea becomes swollen with inflammatory cells, as can happen with infection or trauma, the cornea becomes less transparent. The inflammatory cells cause the cornea to look white or gray to us. This is best treated with antibiotics if this is an infection and sometimes with anti-inflammatory medication.

The skin around the eye can look pink if there is hair loss around the eye. This can happen with excessive tearing that can occur with inflammation and/or infection. The skin can also look like this if it is swollen, again seen with infection or inflammation.

Other diseases can cause these same signs. These diseases can originate inside the eye itself. These diseases include cataracts or an abscess in the eye. I suggest returning to the local humane society and asking if they have a veterinarian on staff that can diagnose and treat your hamster.

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