

Chinchilla With Watery Eye

For two months, a chinchilla with a watery eye condition has baffled its owner and two veterinarians.

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Q: I am very concerned about my chinchilla. About two months ago, he developed a watery eye with a little bit of white discharge at the corner. I took him to the vet straight away. The vet said not to worry, it was only a minor eye infection. He prescribed an eye cream. I applied the eye cream to my chinchilla's cornea, as instructed, for nearly a month. His eye did not seem to get better or worse.

I then removed my chinchilla's dust bath, thinking maybe the dust caused the problem. Nothing happened, other than the fact that my chinchilla seemed annoyed that I took his bath away.

After much searching, I took my chinchilla to a different veterinarian. This new vet was very caring, he spent almost an hour with us, but he wasn't sure what was causing the problem. He said he couldn't see anything in the eye that could cause irritation, and there doesn't seem to be any pressure on the eye either. He recommended an exotics specialist, who can check for malocclusion.

I've researched malocclusion. My chinchilla is not drooling, he is eating normally, he is just as energetic as before, and he is using both sides of his teeth when chewing. He does grind his teeth, but not often. He doesn't seem to be in any pain.

What do you think? Could it possibly be malocclusion? Should I continue with the eye cream, or perhaps try eye drops instead? I don't want to take him to the specialist unless it is necessary. The clinic is a four-hour drive away, and I'm afraid that might cause him too much stress.

A: The advice from your second veterinarian makes a lot of sense. In rare cases, the only sign of malocclusion is eye tearing. This occurs because the root or roots of the upper cheek teeth overgrow and cause a blockage of the duct that drains the tear fluid from the eye. If this duct is blocked, tears build up around the eye. This may happen, rarely, with no other signs of malocclusion, such as tooth grinding or slobbers.

This could also be an infection that has not responded to the medication you received.

You have a few choices. You could ask your veterinarian to suggest another type of eye medication to see if this clears up the problem in your chinchilla. If this does not help, then consider bringing your chinchilla to the exotics doctor that your veterinarian recommended. Or you might want to find a veterinary eye doctor who can also examine your chinchilla's eye.