

Eyebright

What is Eyebright?

Eyebright (*euphrasia officinalis*) is an herb that has mild antimicrobial (antiseptic), anti-inflammatory and astringent properties. As the name suggests, it appears to have a special effect on the eye. It appears effective when used both orally and topically. Homeopathic preparations of Eyebright appear to have similar effects to herbal extracts.



Eyebright contains tannins, aucubin, and quercetin. The tannins appear to have anti-inflammatory activity and may help precipitate the proteins of corneal ulcers to form a barrier that resists further damage. Aucubin is a limited spectrum anti-microbial and anti-viral compound. Quercetin is believed to inhibit the release of histamine by immune system cells during allergic reactions.

Why recommend administration of Eyebright to my pet?

Eyebright is commonly prescribed by veterinary herbalists for eye inflammation in pets, particularly conjunctivitis (inflammation of the mucous membrane surrounding the eye) from a variety of causes. Its use in animals is inspired by its apparent effectiveness in humans. It appears especially effective when integrated into treatment protocols for feline viral upper respiratory infections.

What species of animals are being treated regularly with Eyebright?

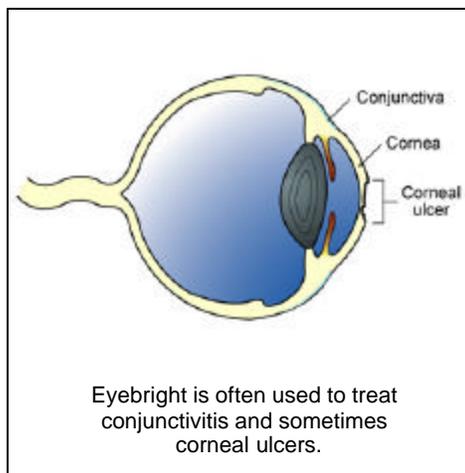
Euphrasia is a benign herb, and is probably safe for administration in most species. Dogs, cats, and horses are the animals most commonly treated.

How much research has been conducted on this supplement?

Most of the evidence for effectiveness comes from herbal tradition and clinical experience rather than controlled research studies.

How can my pet benefit from Eyebright?

Euphrasia may be used in bacterial, allergic and viral conjunctivitis. It is not recommended as a sole treatment for corneal ulcers, but may be beneficial when used with other medications and surgical procedures.

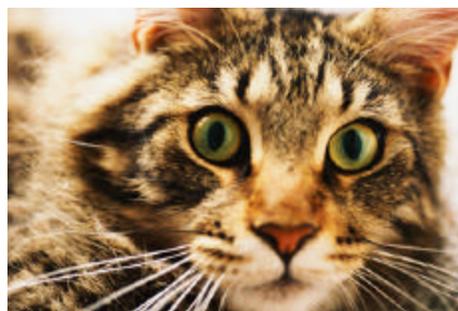


How successful is Eyebright?

Effectiveness will vary with the severity of the problem. Where the underlying cause is persistent, Eyebright will have to be used regularly. Where eye inflammation is promoting further irritation through rubbing, Eyebright may resolve the problem. It is an excellent alternative to corticosteroid eyedrops, which may worsen corneal ulcers if used inappropriately, and which have been documented to have the potential for systemic side effects when used excessively. Eyebright may be a safer alternative to corticosteroids in mild eye disorders since it not only relieves inflammation, but may help protect against the incidence of ulcers. The use of additional antimicrobial or immune stimulating agents may be required in the treatment of contagious forms of conjunctivitis.

How safe is Eyebright?

One potential concern is the risk of bacterial contamination of Eyebright eye drops. Contamination is easily avoided by purchasing sealed containers, avoiding contact of the tip of the bottle with the skin, storing the drops according to the manufacturer's directions, and observing product expiration dates. These concerns are not relevant when oral herbal and homeopathic preparations are used.



There is an extremely remote risk that Eyebright may induce eye inflammation in some rare individuals. This irritation disappears immediately when the herb is discontinued. A more likely problem is simply that Eyebright may be ineffective in some cases. When persistent use seems required, or Eyebright is not effective at all, animals should be evaluated by a veterinarian. Eye disorders are potentially serious and highly destructive and should be promptly investigated if they fail to resolve quickly and easily.

Where do I obtain Eyebright and do I need a prescription?

Your veterinarian may have preferred products that he or she will recommend. Consumers should be aware that quality of preparations may vary considerably among manufacturers. A prescription for Eyebright is not required. Due in part to its extreme usefulness, Eyebright is becoming a threatened plant. Homeopathic preparations contain less of the plant yet are just as effective. As a result, they may be more environmentally friendly.

This client information sheet is based on material written by Steve Marsden, DVM ND MSOM LAc DiplCH AHG, Shawn Messonnier, DVM and Cheryl Yuill, DVM, MSc, CVH.

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