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SUDDEN ACQUIRED RETINAL DEGENERATION SYNDROME

Sudden Acquired Retinal Degeneration Syndrome (SARDS) is a condition characterized by a rapid onset of blindness. Pets that develop SARDS are often older than six years of age, and it occurs in any breed. The patient is typically fine one day and then is bumping into things the next. The blindness can seem to occur overnight. Some owners notice an increase in appetite and water consumption. Examination by our veterinary ophthalmologist reveals that the patient has apparently normal eyes, but is blind. Because the eyes appear normal, an electronic test of the retina (electroretinogram or ERG) is necessary to assess retinal function and diagnose SARDS. If you think of the eye like a camera, the retina is like the film. In SARDS, the retina is no longer functional. The cause of SARDS is not known, and vision cannot be restored. There is a lot research being done on this condition; however, there is currently no safe and effective treatment available.

While SARDS results in irreversible blindness, it is fortunately not painful. Your pet is not in any discomfort, and with time will adjust to the vision loss. There is a possible association with SARDS and a metabolic disease called Cushing's disease. So if your dog has been diagnosed with SARDS we may recommend bloodwork with your primary veterinarian to rule out this condition.