

ABC Veterinary Clinic

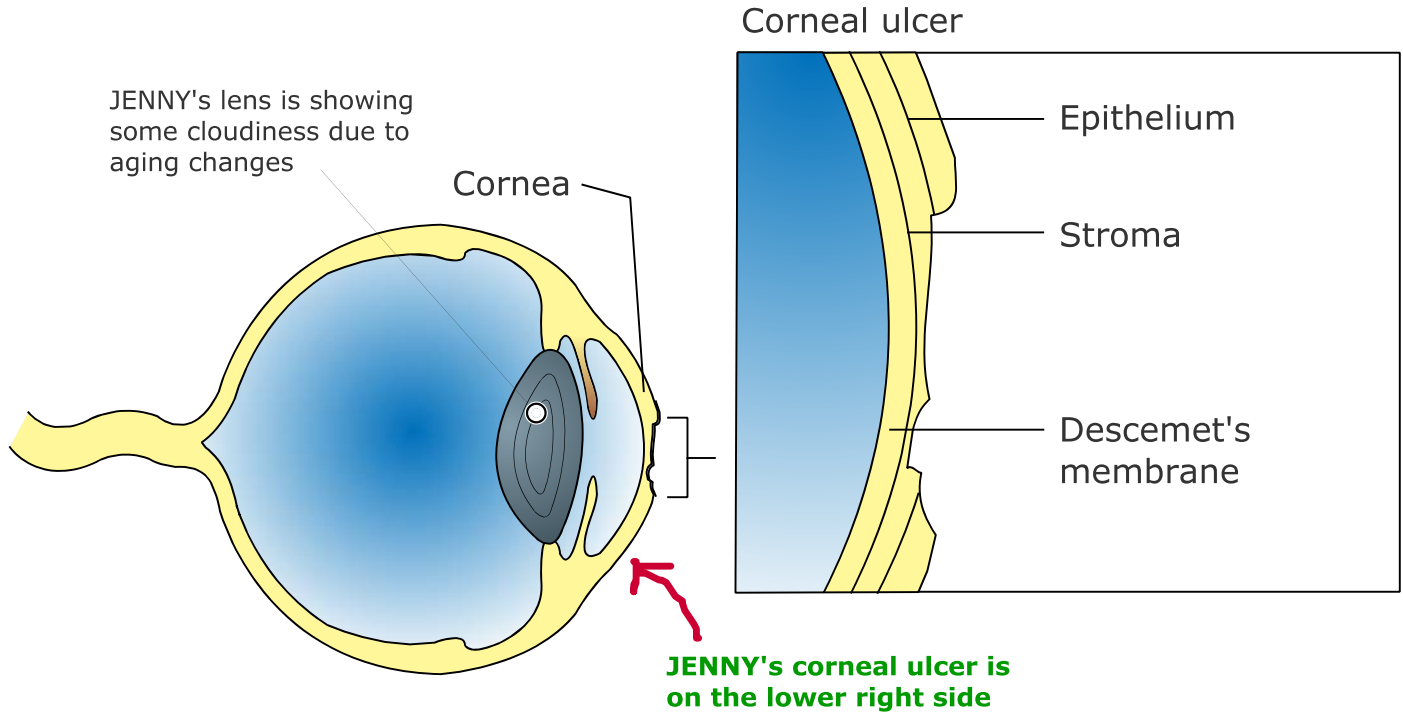
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Corneal Ulcer: Cross section of eye with an inset showing corneal layers.



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The cornea is the transparent membrane that covers the front surface of the eye, and is composed of three layers of cells, as shown in the diagram. It is not possible to identify the individual layers without special stains. A corneal ulcer forms when the epithelial layer of the cornea is eroded, exposing the stroma. An untreated ulcer can penetrate the deeper layers and may cause irreparable damage. Most corneal ulcers are caused by trauma - blunt trauma from rubbing the eyes, lacerations from sharp objects, or chemical irritation from shampoo. They can also be caused by other eye problems, including inherited or acquired eyelid abnormalities that cause the eyelashes to rub on the cornea, and by poor tear production. These conditions are more common in certain breeds. Occasionally, corneal ulcers may develop secondary to other metabolic diseases. A corneal ulcer is very painful. Thus the patient will often keep the eye closed, and may rub the affected eye with a paw or on the carpet in an attempt to relieve this intense pain.