

LIVING WITH POAG-AFFECTED PETITS

Finding out that your dog has been diagnosed with POAG, and there is every likelihood she/he may go blind, is initially very upsetting.

When this happened to my 6yr old PBGV Cilla and her litter brother Rodney my first thoughts were "OK, it's very sad but it is what it is, now let's deal with it!" This was before the DNA had been established and it was picked up on a routine check.

On diagnosis, Cilla's pressures were well over 50 in both eyes but Rod's were both under 20. Obviously, Cilla's condition was far more advanced than her brother's.

Professor Peter Bedford, who carried out the checks, recommended that Cilla was immediately administered XALATAN (LATANOPROST is the generic and much cheaper version of Xalatan) drops in both eyes, once daily, which was soon after increased to twice daily. It was discovered that Rod had wobbly lenses so there wasn't any need at that point for drops but, soon after, he was put on them as a prophylactic.

Cilla is now on 2 types of drops, LATANOPROST and DORZOLAMIDE. (DORZOLAMIDE is the cheaper and generic version of COSOPT, which also contains TIMOLOL). I source them from a pharmacist using a prescription from my vet.

The veterinary script is bought from your vets (anything from £10 to £28) but they will need to have sight of your dog's eye certificate which will recommend the drops that are needed and details of administration so this may be transferred on to the prescription for the pharmacist to process.

It is advisable to use a larger chemist eg Tesco or Co-op. I use the Co-op chemist and find them excellent. I first tried a local private chemist who charged 3 times the price of the Co-op. The vet script lasts for 6 months and I buy the drops on a monthly basis. Latanoprost is to be kept in the fridge. Dorzolamide is not.

Some POAG affected dogs are prescribed different drops but all to the same end which is to keep the pressures down.

Cilla's pressures have started to increase quite rapidly now so I've increased administration of drops to 3 times daily and she has pressure checks at least twice yearly.

Sadly, there are still canine ophthalmic specialists who, after making a POAG diagnosis, are recommending surgery on the lenses at several thousands of pounds when drops are more than sufficient.

I have also been made aware of a specialist who has told the owner that vets are not happy giving prescriptions! (Vets are by law obliged to sell you a prescription from whence you can source the drops or any form of veterinary drugs, which can be bought far more cheaply from a pharmacy or online.)

Online POAG eye drops are more expensive than from a chemist. I was made aware of this 5 years ago by my own Ophthalmic Consultant! I pay approx £3 per 2.5ml of Latanoprost and approx £4 for 5ml of Dorzolamide.

Rodney's pressures are still good, around the 20 mark and he is on drops twice daily but still has good sight. His condition had not progressed as far as his sister's at the initial diagnosis so the drops given prophylactically really curbed the pressures.

Even though Cilla now has no sight you would not believe she is blind. She copes amazingly well. Petits are scent hounds and as such rely far more on their scent than sight. She is off lead in the woods and quarry and, as long as she can sniff out and eat as much rabbit poo as possible, she's a happy little hound!

Any help or advice I can give anyone living with POAG affected dogs please let me know.

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