

My Cat Gets 'Blood Spots' in His Eyes

CatChannel veterinary expert Arnold Plotnick, DVM, discusses potential causes of eye discoloration.

By Arnold Plotnick, DVM

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Q: I've enjoyed your column in CAT FANCY for years. My question is: Can my cat have high blood pressure? He is about 6 years old, neutered, and sometimes has bleeding in his eyes, which I have just read in the May 2009 issue of CAT FANCY might mean high blood pressure. About four or five times a year I have noticed that he has what appears to be "blood spots" in one eye or the other. The spots are tiny (about the size of a pinhead) but big enough to be noticeable. They are always on the colored part of his eye, usually the bottom and outside part. The blood absorbs in a couple of days and he doesn't seem to be in pain. I have not had this problem evaluated by a veterinarian yet. What would I ask my vet to do to test him for HBP? How is it treated?

A: Cats can indeed have high blood pressure. The most common causes of hypertension (the medical term for high blood pressure) are chronic renal failure and hyperthyroidism. Both of these conditions tend to be in older cats, so I think it would be unusual for your 6- year-old cat to have high blood pressure.

I cannot tell from your description what the "blood spots" are that you describe. A reddish discoloration of the iris (the colored part of the eye) can be seen in a condition called uveitis ("you-vee-itis"), an inflammation of some of the internal structures of the eye. There are a number of potential causes for this.

Another possibility is something called hyphema, which is bleeding into the anterior chamber of the eye (the space between the cornea and the iris).

If you're concerned about high blood pressure, ask your veterinarian to measure it. In this day and age, most veterinarians can measure blood pressure easily in the office. Treatment involves giving oral medication, with amlodipine (Norvasc) being the drug of choice.

I'm more concerned about your cat's eye, however. The next time these "blood spots" appear, I would strongly consider taking your cat to a veterinary ophthalmologist, to obtain a definite diagnosis of his condition.