



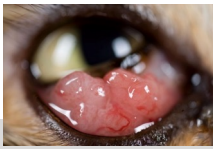
THE UNIVERSITY
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MADISON

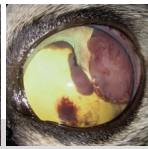


Uveal Melanocytic Neoplasia

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Associate Professor, Richard R. Dubielzig Professor of Comparative Ocular Pathology and
Director of the Comparative Ocular Pathology Laboratory of Wisconsin - COPLOW
University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine




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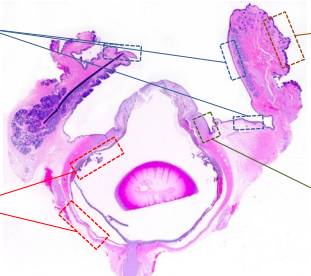
Diagnosis of Ocular/Periocular Melanocytic Tumors

Not all black masses are made equal!

- Species differences
 - Dogs ≠ Cats ≠ Horses
- Location differences
 - Uveal ≠ Conjunctival ≠ Eyelid skin ≠ Limbal

Conjunctival
Palpebral, bulbar & 3rd eyelid

- Melanomas > melanocytoma
- Often recur, rarely met.
- Can be multifocal – pagetoid spread



Eyelid, Cutaneous

- Identical to cutaneous other sites
- Melanocytoma > Melanomas

Uveal

- Melanocytoma > Melanomas
- Iris/CB > Choroid
- Rarely met. or recur

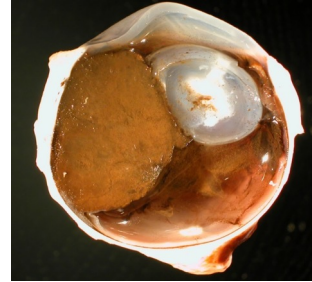
Limbus

- Limbal melanocytoma
- Almost always benign

2

2135/5722 Canine Melanocytic Tumors (numbers from 2012)

- Most common ocular neoplasms in dogs
- Affecting the Globe: 1871
 - Anterior Uveal Melanocytoma: 1245
 - Anterior Uveal Malignant Melanoma: 312
 - Limbal Melanocytoma: 213
- Choroidal:
 - 86 Melanocytoma
 - 11 malignant Melanoma
- Metastatic Melanoma: 15



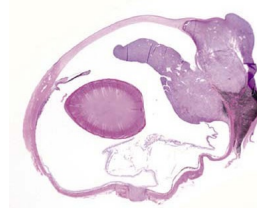
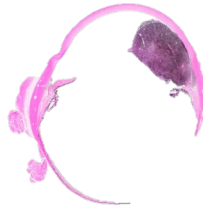
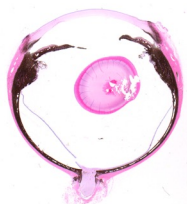
1. Giuliano EA, Chappel R, Fischer B, **Dubielzig RR**. (1999) A matched observational study of canine survival with primary intraocular melanocytic neoplasia. *Vet. Ophthalmol.* 2: 185-190.

3

Ocular Pigmented Melanocytic lesions in dog

Diagnosed at COPLOW:

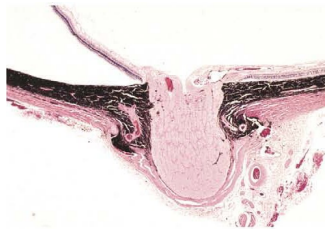
- Heavily pigmented globe
- Ocular melanosis
- Melanocytoma
- Melanoma (malignant)



4

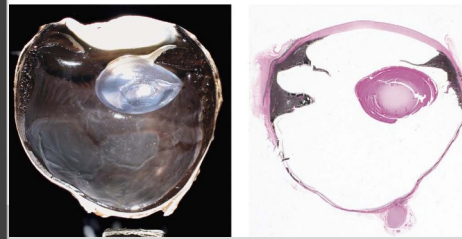
Heavily pigmented globe

- Cairn terriers, Boxers
Labradors, Rottweilers.
- Normal phenotype
- Normal architecture



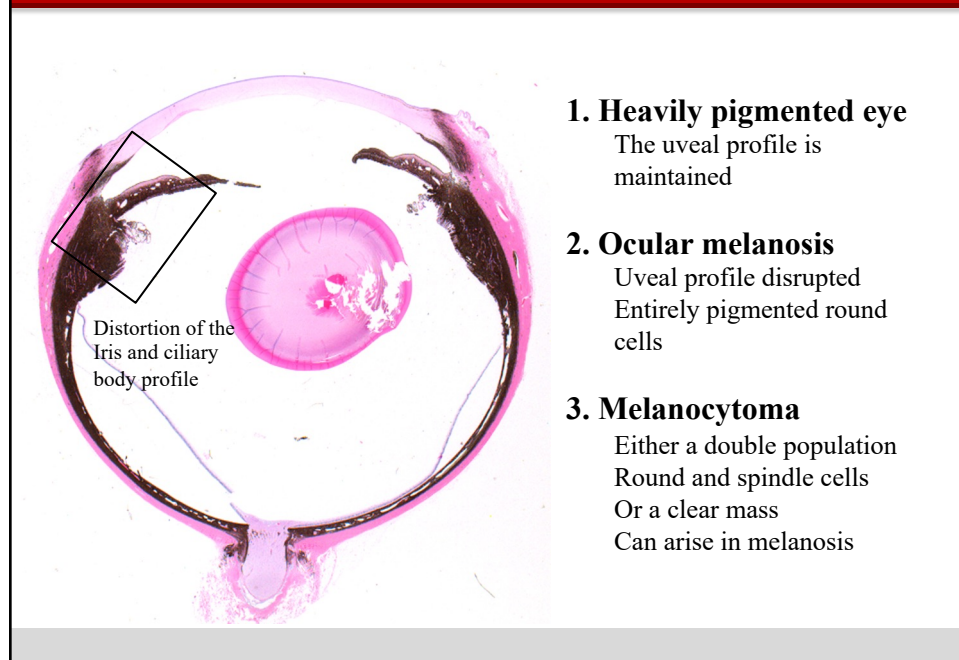
Ocular Melanosis

- Cairn terriers, Boxers
and Labradors.
- Increase numbers and
size of melanocytes
- Uveal distortion



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Ocular Melanosis



1. Heavily pigmented eye

The uveal profile is
maintained

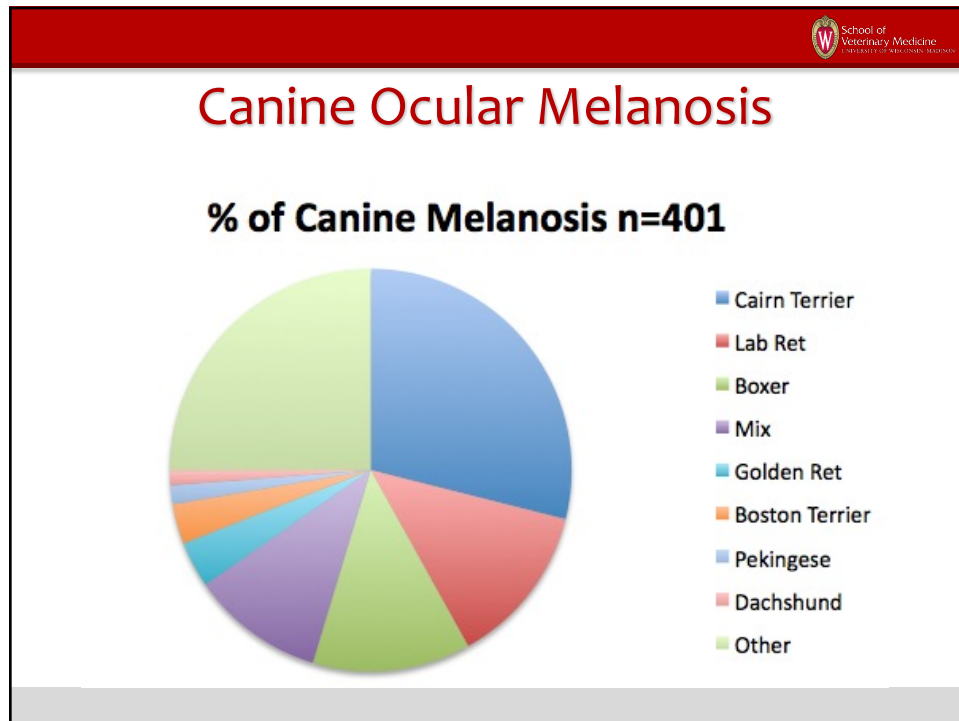
2. Ocular melanosis

Uveal profile disrupted
Entirely pigmented round
cells

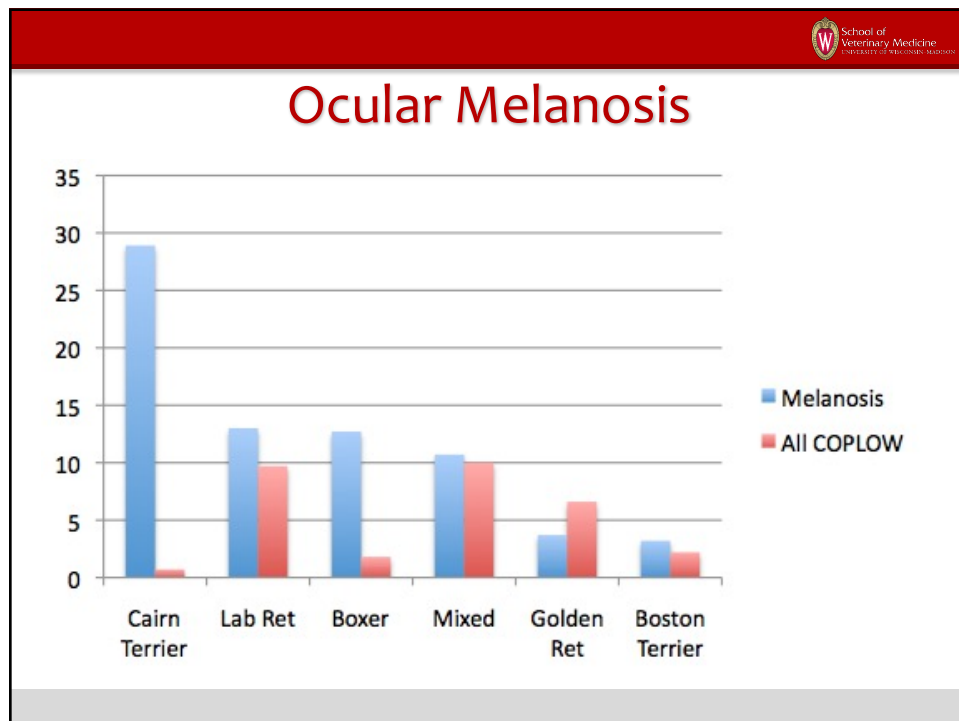
3. Melanocytoma

Either a double population
Round and spindle cells
Or a clear mass
Can arise in melanosis

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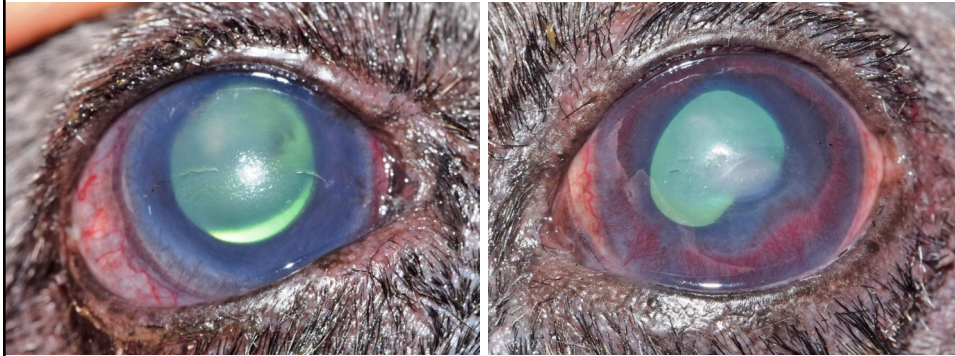


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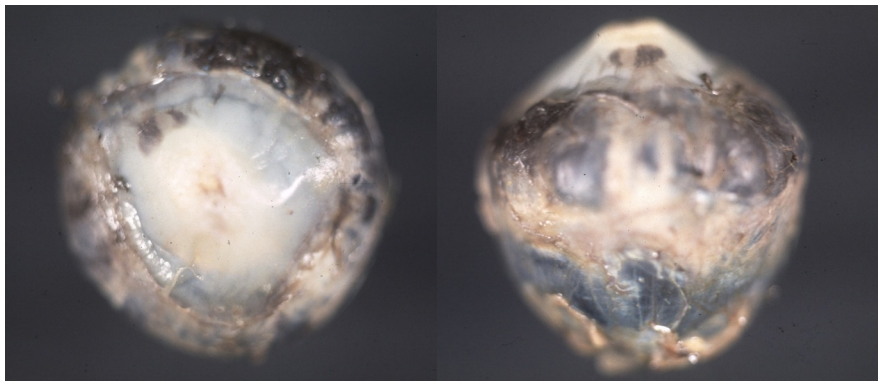
Ocular Melanosis



Hyperpigmented and distorted iris

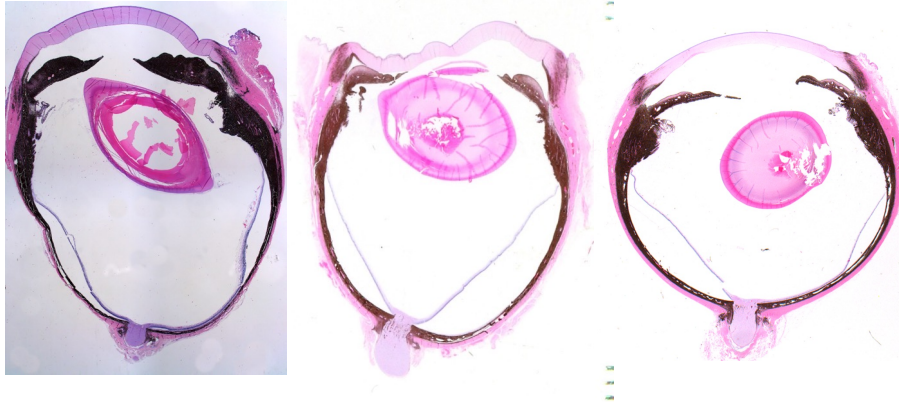
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Ocular Melanosis



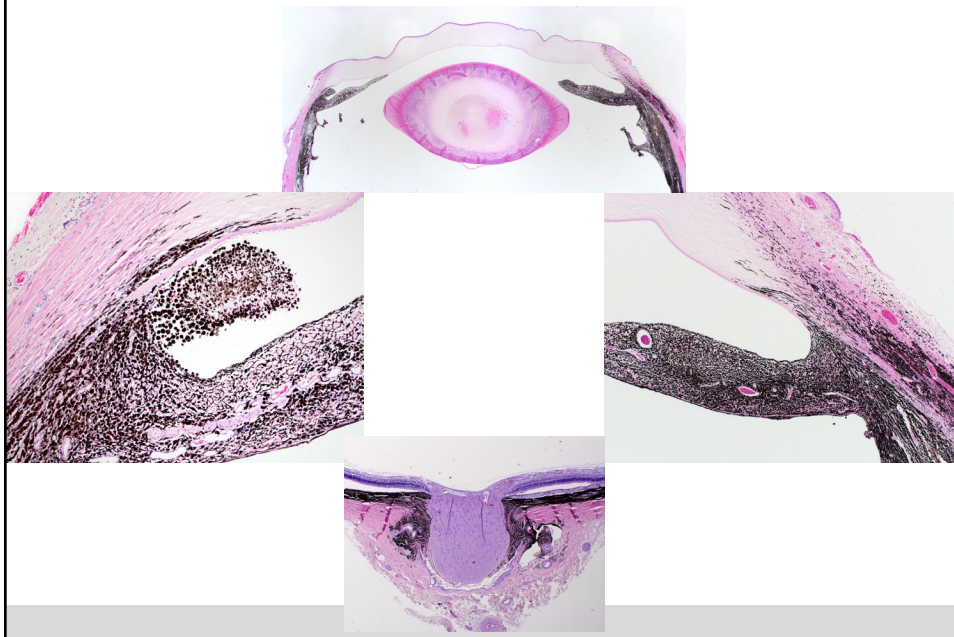
Hyperpigmented uvea, sclera and no mass lesion
and no double papulation (spindel and round)

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Excessive pigmentation often seen throughout the uvea

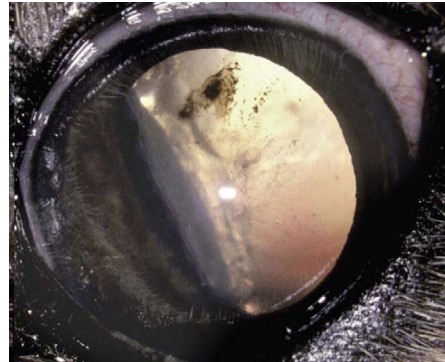
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Uveal Melanocytoma

- Most common in the iris and ciliary body, typically affecting both
- 94% anterior, 6% choroidal
- 75% of anterior melanocytic neoplasms are benign
- 85% of choroidal melanocytic neoplasms are benign



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Anterior Uveal Melanocytoma

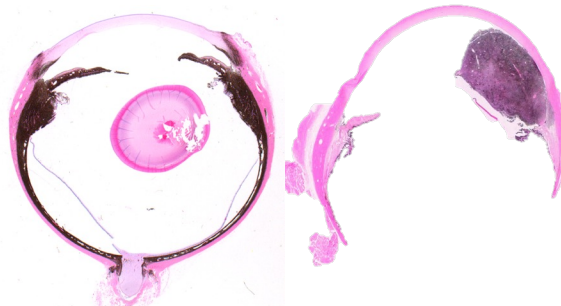
Many cases arise within ocular melanosis or heavily pigmented globes

Melanosis

Melanocytoma

Melanocytoma:

- Distinct mass lesion or
- Double population of spindle and round cells



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Uveal Melanocytoma

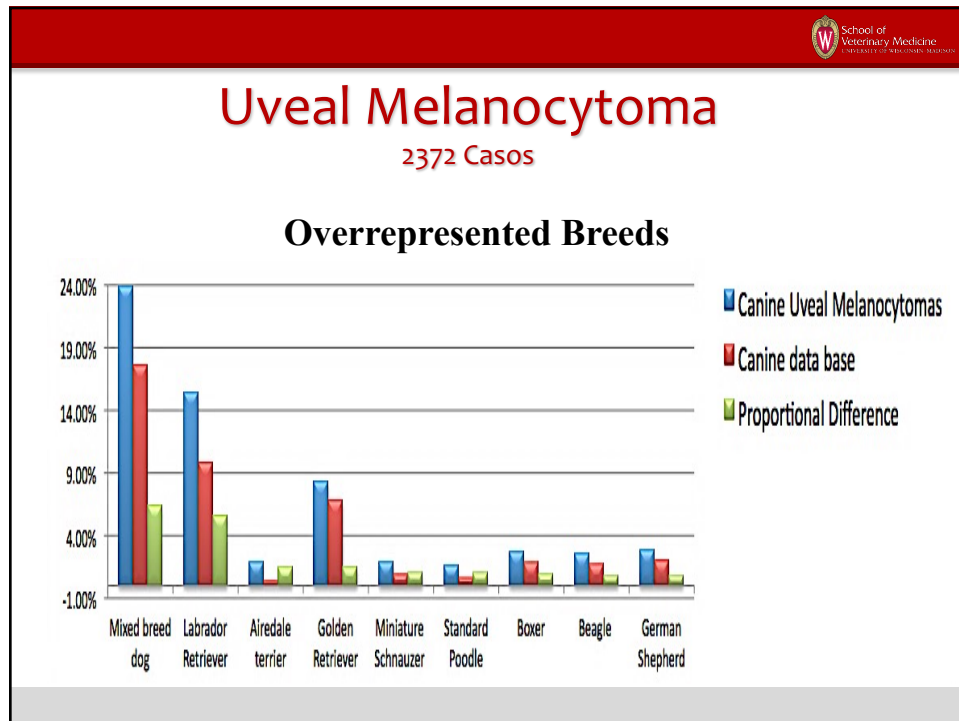
- Similar histologic appearance independent of their location
- Variable proportions of heavily pigmented spindle cells and discohesive heavily pigmented plump polyhedral cells
- Mitotic count of < 3-5 in 10 HPF (2.37 mm²)
- Readily efface the iridocorneal angle
- Many expand along the corneoscleral meshwork in the deep peripheral corneal stroma
- Scleral and extrascleral extension is common (not a feature of malignancy)

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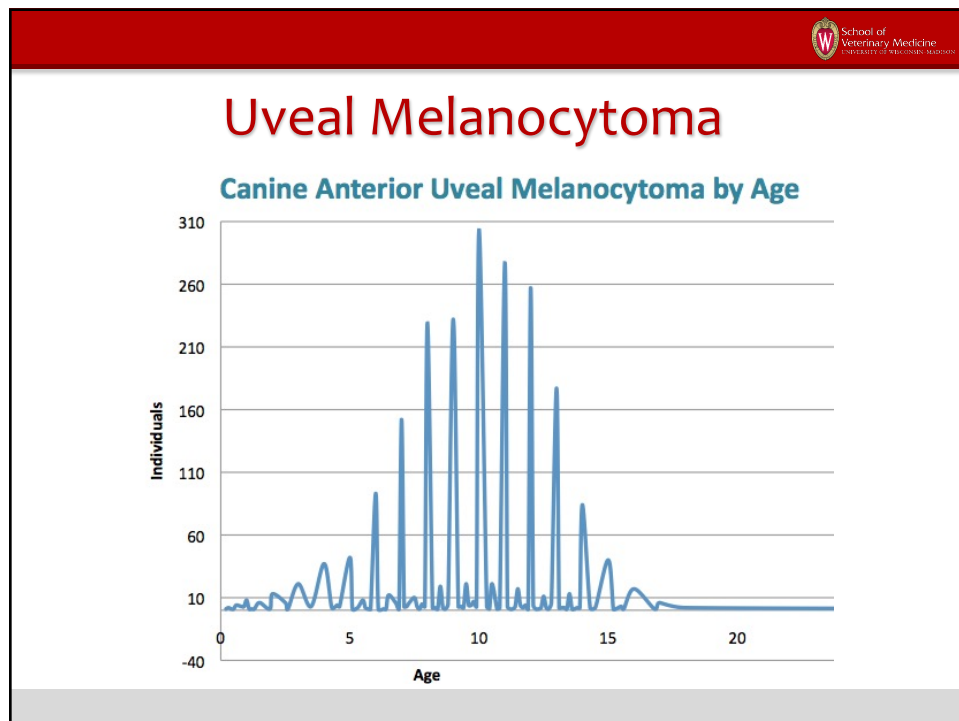
Uveal Melanocytoma

- Individualized pigmented cells may be seen in the anterior and posterior chambers and vitreous
- Necrosis and infiltration of melanophages are common
- Secondary findings: Intraocular hemorrhage, pre-iridal fibrovascular membrane, asteroid hyalosis, and glaucoma
- Retinal detachment is expected with choroidal melanocytomas

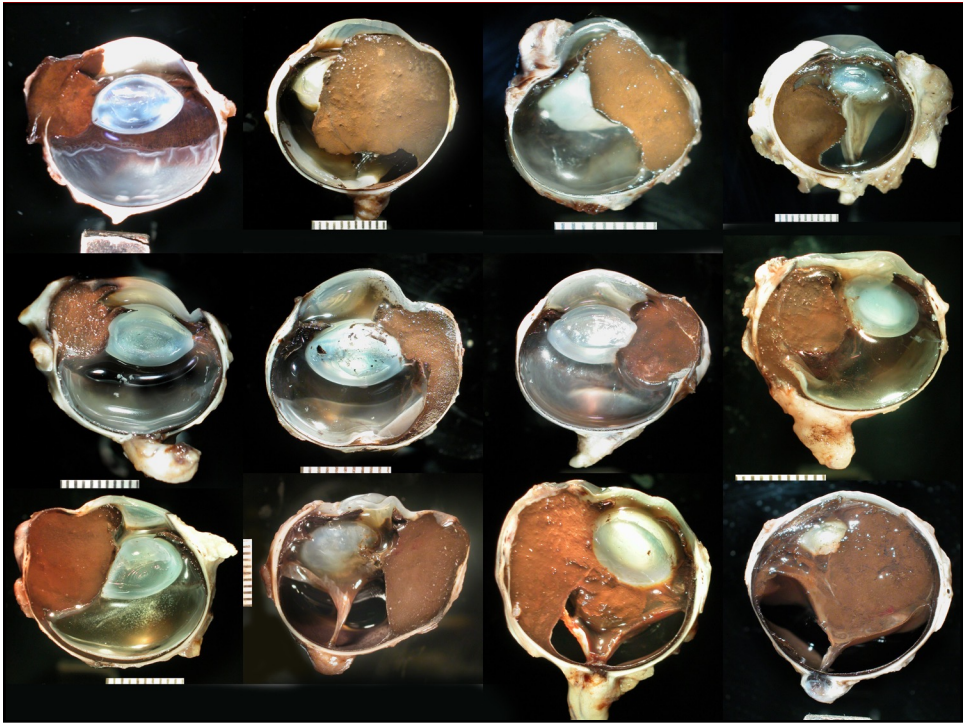
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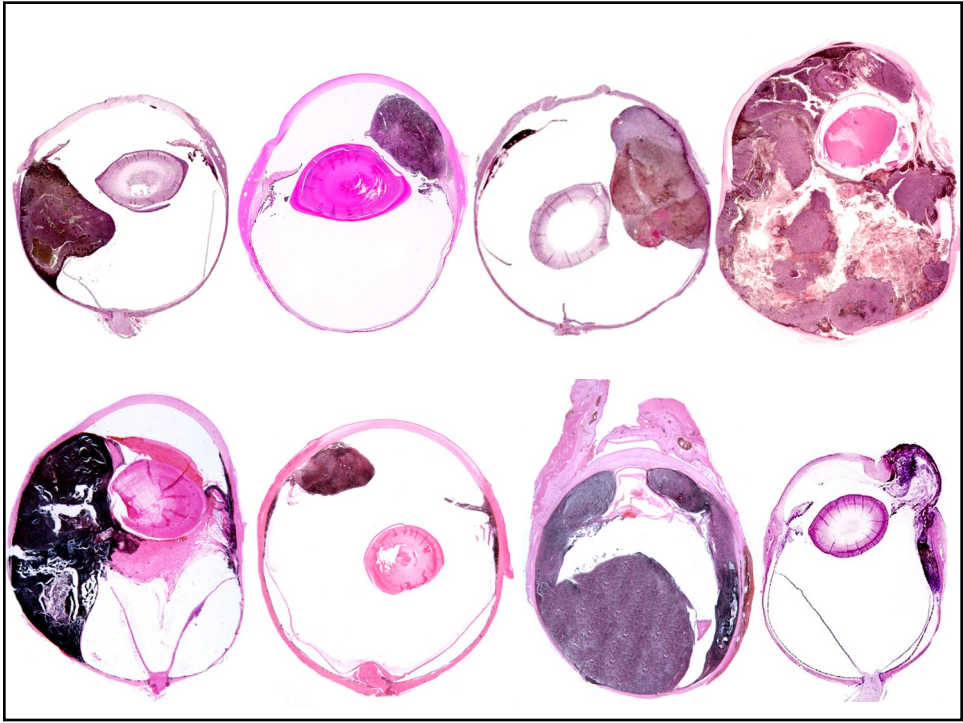
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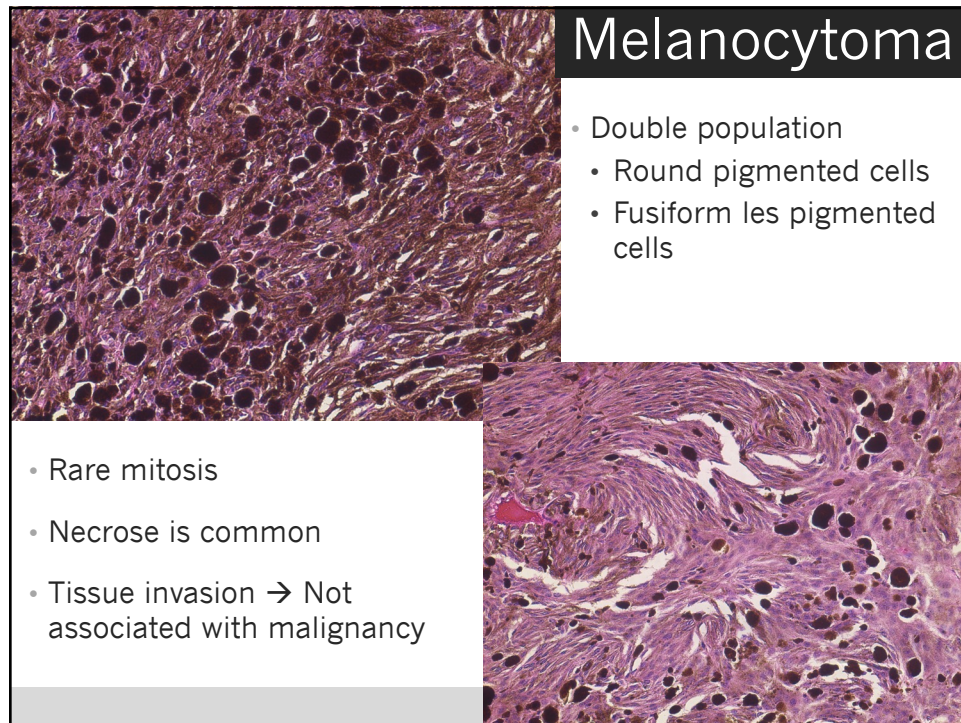
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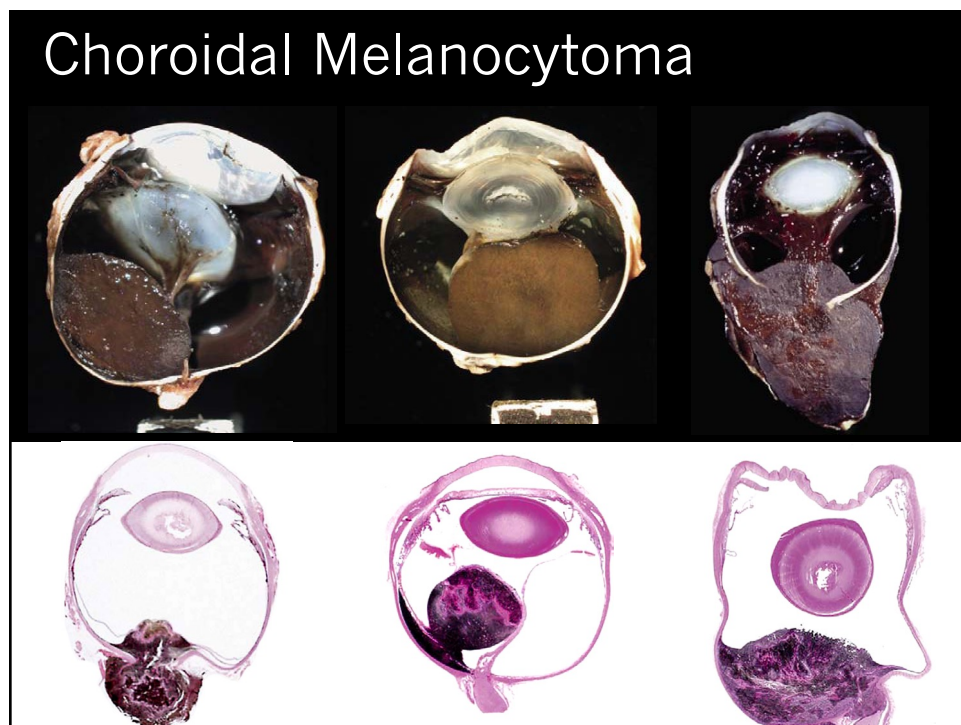
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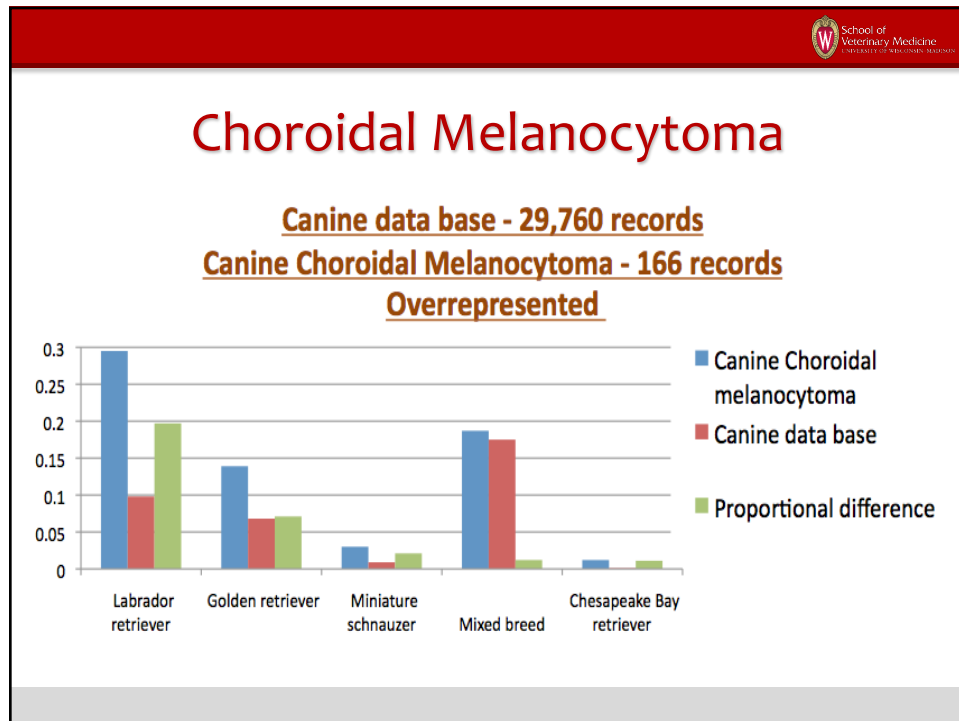
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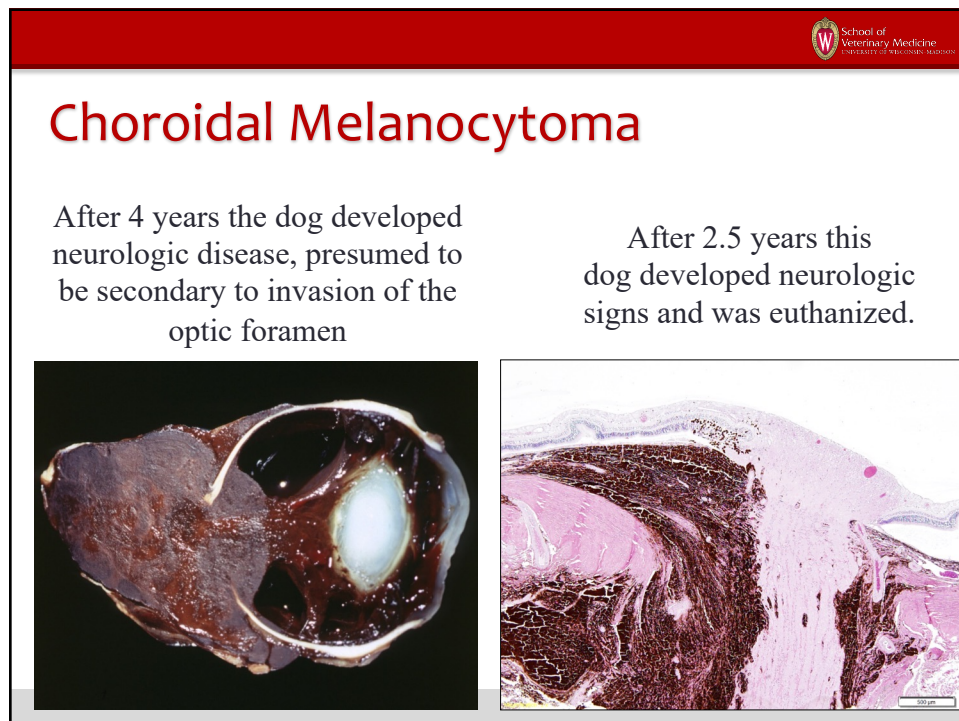
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Anterior Uveal Malignant Melanoma

312 cases

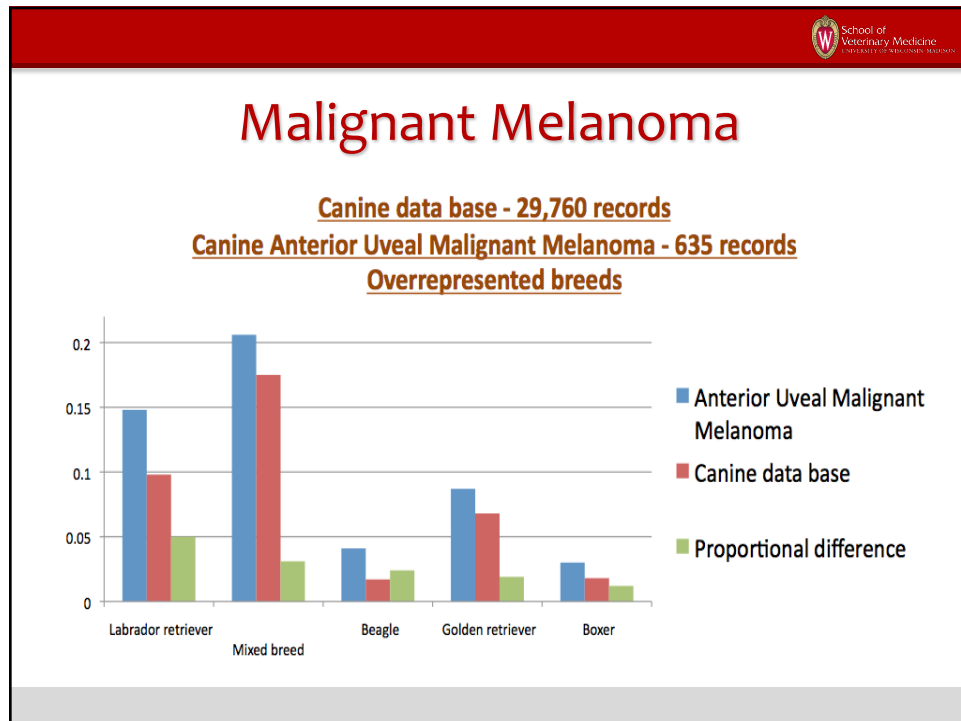
- Most common in the iris and ciliary body, typically affecting both
- 97% anterior, 3% choroidal
- 25% of anterior melanocytic neoplasms are malignant
- 15% of choroidal melanocytic neoplasms are malignant
- No histologic features can reliably predict metastasis
- Anecdotal metastatic rate <5%

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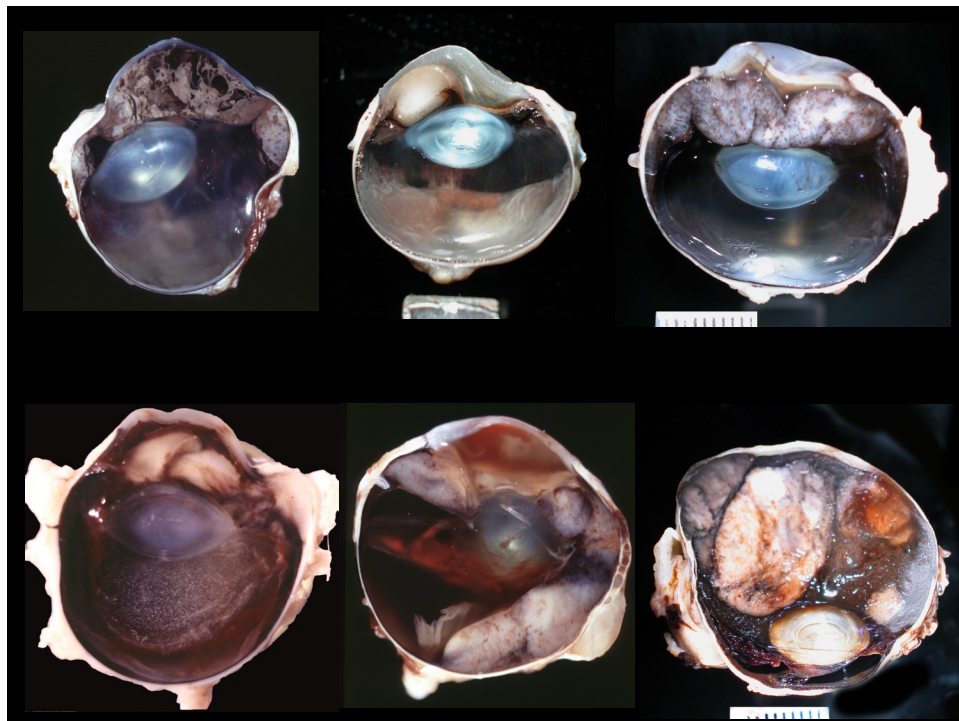
Anterior Uveal Malignant Melanoma

- Similar histologic appearance independent of their location
- Spindle cells to polygonal cells
- Variably pigmented
- Moderate to severe pleomorphism
- Mitotic count of 3-5 or more in 10 HPF (2.37 mm²)
- Readily efface the iridocorneal angle
- Many expand along the corneoscleral meshwork in the deep peripheral corneal stroma
- Scleral and extrascleral extension is common

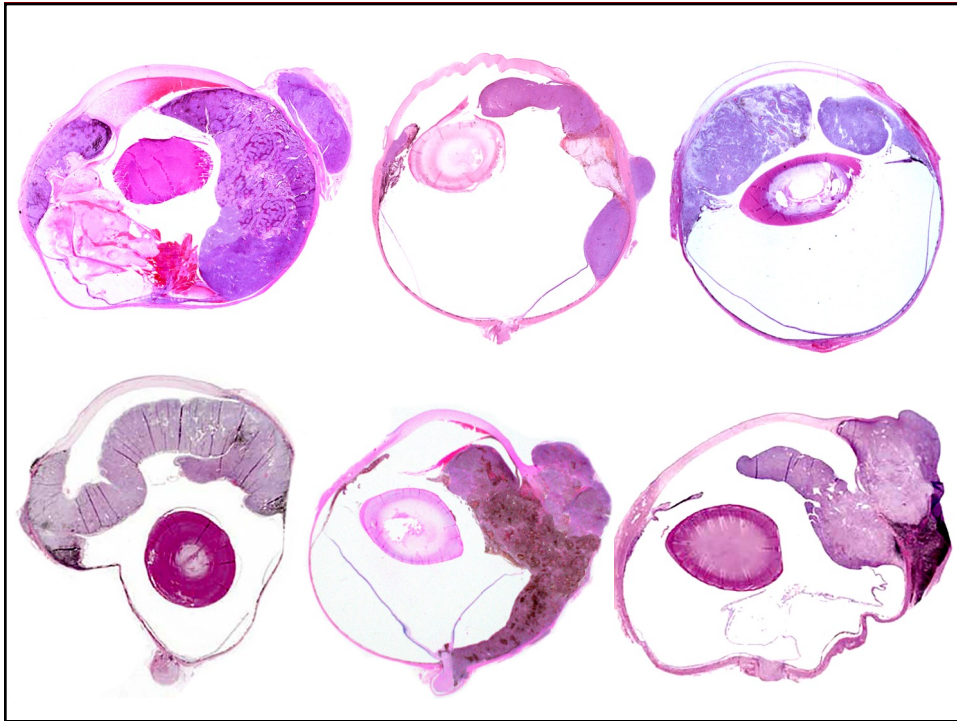
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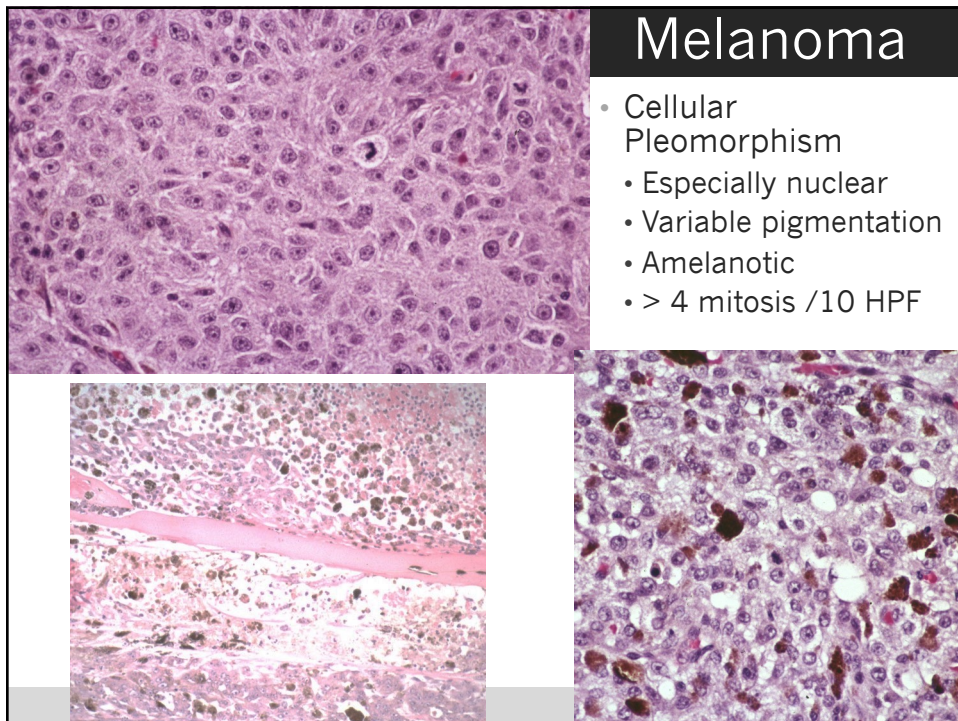
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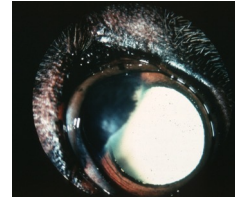
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Limbal Melanocytoma (epibulbar)

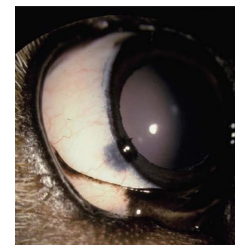
- Brown to black
- Almost all benign (melanocytomas)
- Broad-based nodule
- Arise from the melanocytes that demarcate the limbus at the junction of the corneal stroma and sclera



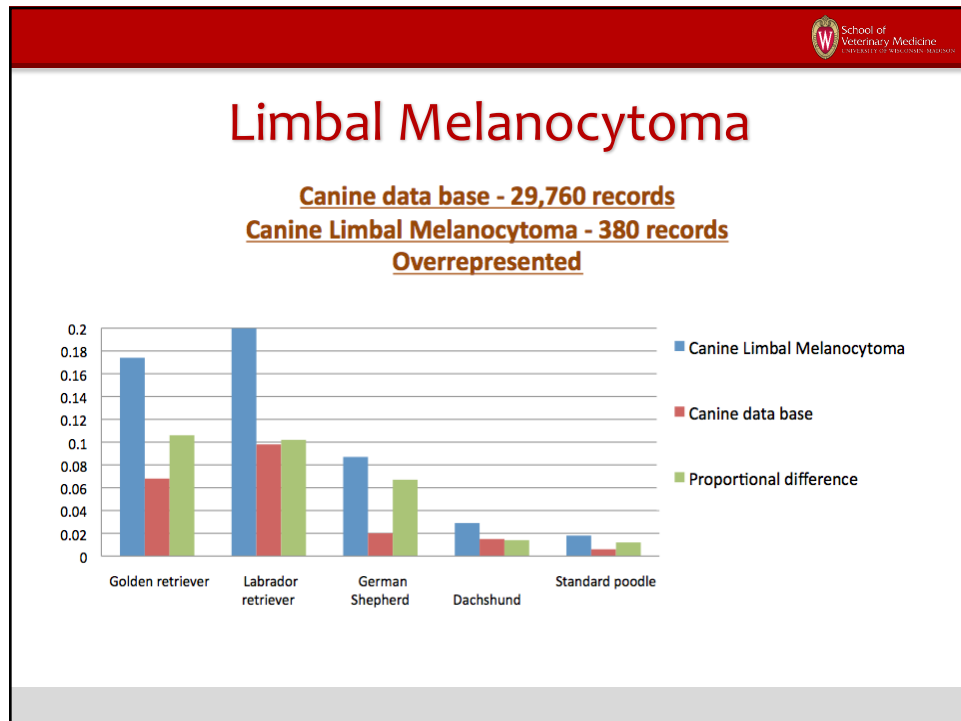
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Limbal Melanocytoma (epibulbar)

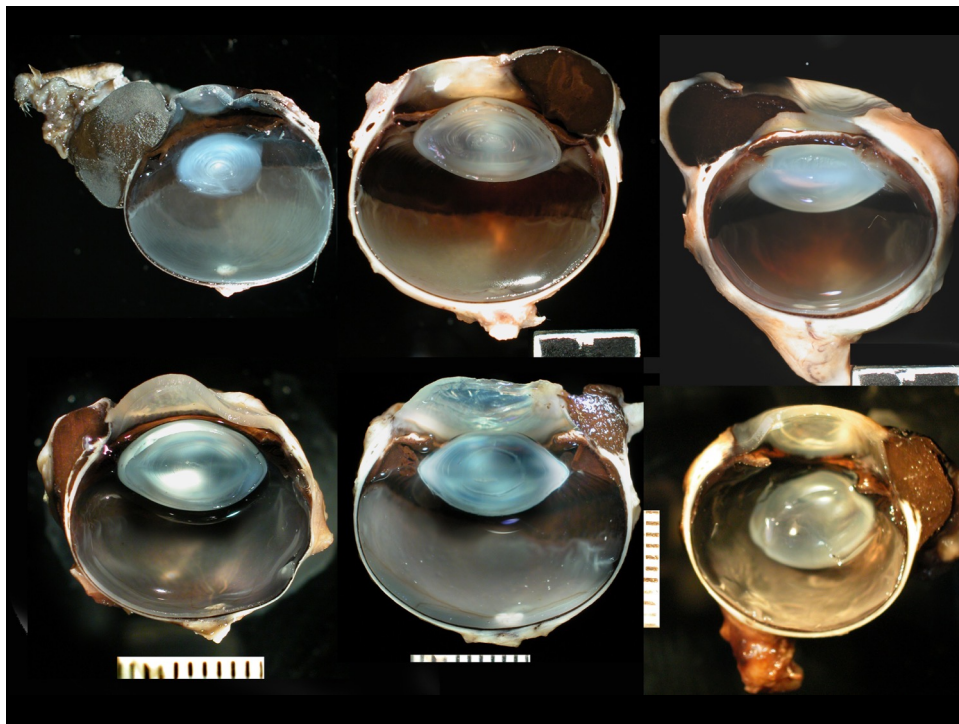
- Discohesive heavily pigmented plump polyhedral cells often admixed with fewer pigmented spindle cells
- No atypia, mitoses are rare to absent
- Expands along the planes of least resistance: conjunctiva > corneal stroma
- Necrosis in approx. 20% of cases
- May extend intraocularly
- Rare limbal malignant melanomas
- Some benign neoplasms include areas with atypical cells



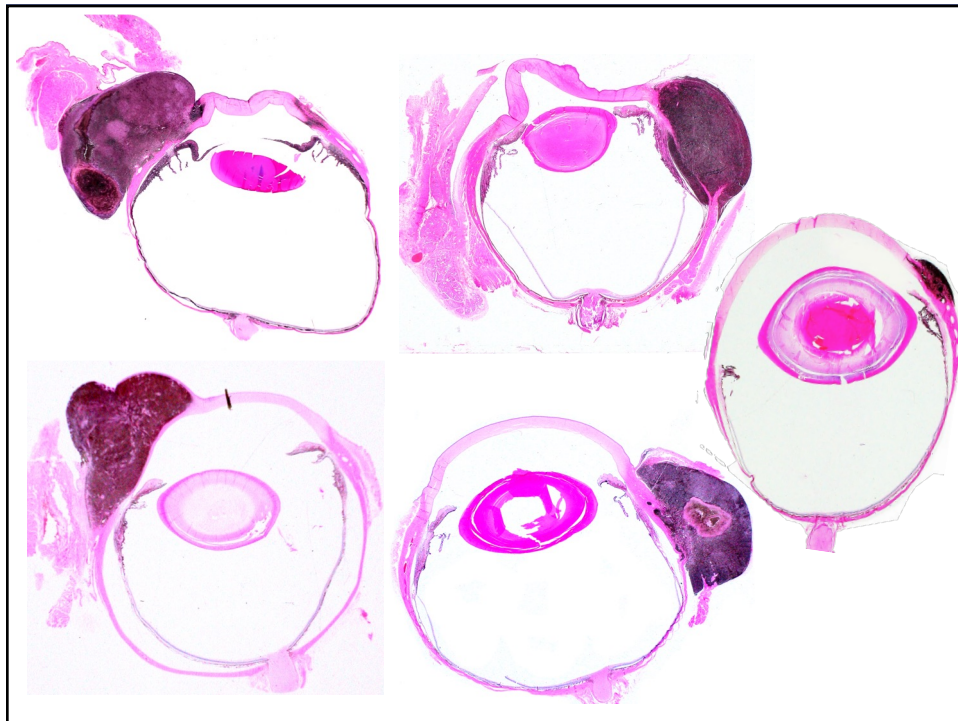
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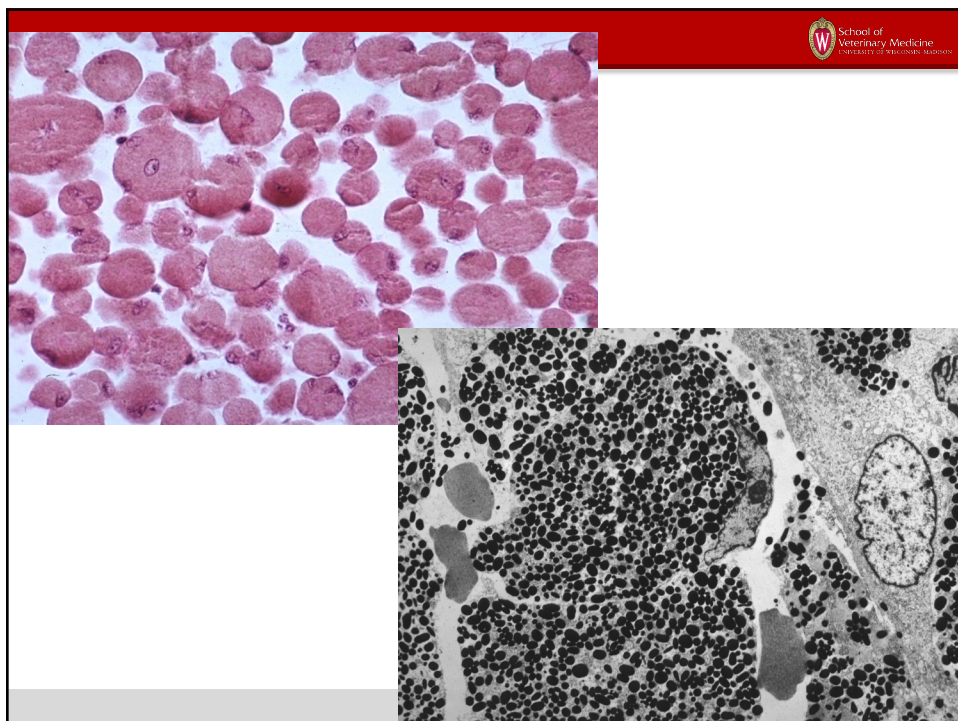
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Melanocytic tumors in cats:

- Feline diffuse iris melanoma (FDIM)
- Feline choriociliary melanoma (FCCM)

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Melanocytic tumors in cats:

- Feline diffuse iris melanoma (FDIM)

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Feline diffuse iris melanoma (FDIM)

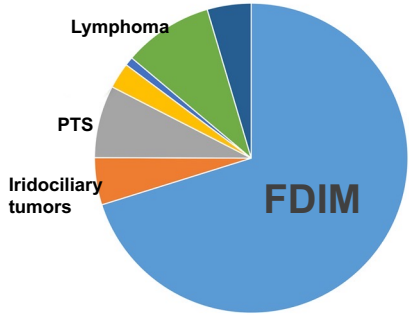
- Most common feline ocular tumor

Diffuse Iris Melanoma > 4000 cases

- Approx. 27% of all feline submission
- Approx. 50% of all feline tumors
- Approx. 70% of all feline intraocular tumors

Progressive and insidious melanocytic neoplasm that diffusely infiltrates the uveal tissue

COPLOW database



FDIM

Lymphoma

PTS

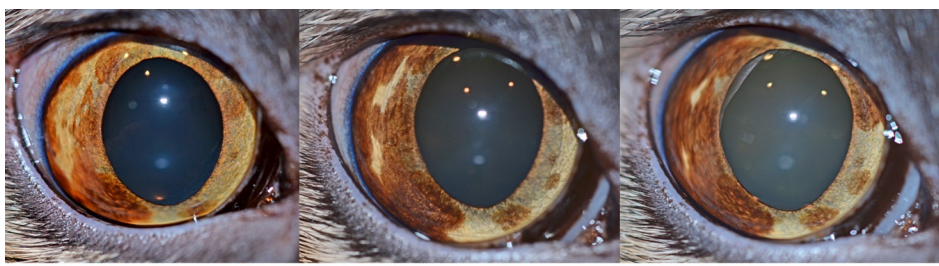
Iridociliary tumors

Kalishman JV, Chappell R, Flood LA, Dubielzig RR (1998). A matched observational study of survival in cats with enucleation due to diffuse iris melanoma. *Vet. Ophthalmol.* 1: 25-29.

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Typical Clinical Appearance of Feline Diffuse Iris Melanoma



Photos by Chuck Stuhr

2 Months **4 Months**

Asymmetrical Darkening of the Iris
This process can occur rapidly or take years

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FDIM Histologic Features

Key histologic features:

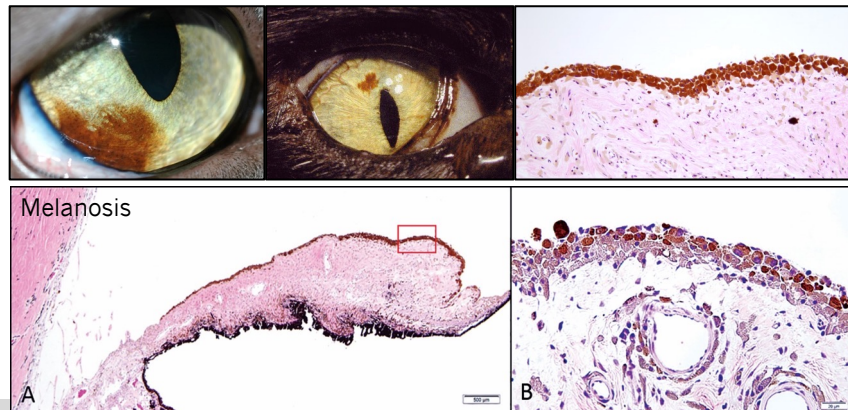
- Distribution
 - Multifocal to diffuse
 - Iris surface – Stroma – Extension to rest of uvea, sclera, etc.
- Pigment (variable)
 - Pheomelanin vs eumelanin
- Anisocytosis/anisokaryosis - karyomegaly
- Cytoplasmic invaginations into nucleus (pseudoinclusions)
- IHC: Express Melan-A, PNL-2, +/- E-cadherin

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FDIM Histologic Classification

Melanosis vs FDIM

- Melanosis – Pre-neoplastic lesion. Only iris surface
- FDIM – Infiltration of the iris stroma

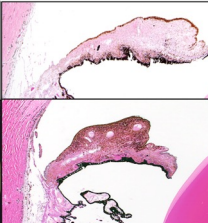
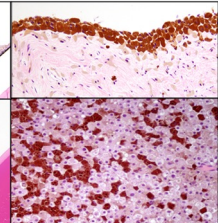
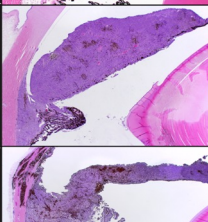
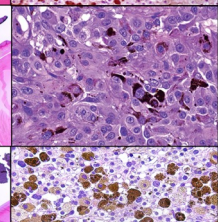
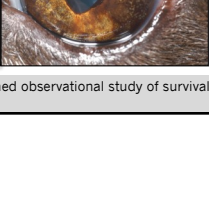
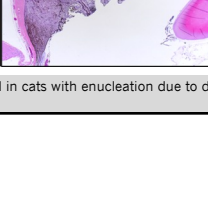
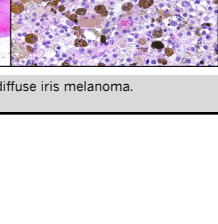


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FDIM - Histologic Classification

Based on extent of neoplastic infiltration:

Melanosis			
FDIM Early			
FDIM			
FDIM Extensive			

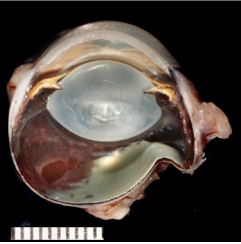
Kalishman, Chappell, Flood, Dubielzig. A matched observational study of survival in cats with enucleation due to diffuse iris melanoma. *Veterinary Ophthalmology* (1998) 1, 1, 25-29

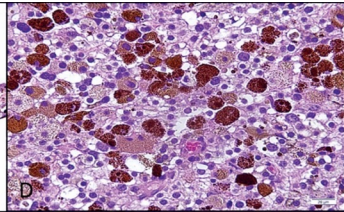
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FDIM Histologic Classification

- **FDIM Early**
- FDIM
- FDIM Extensive

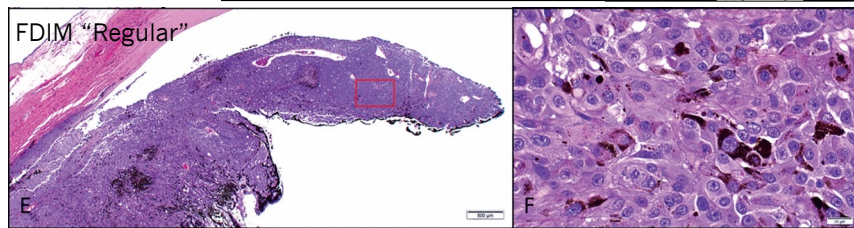
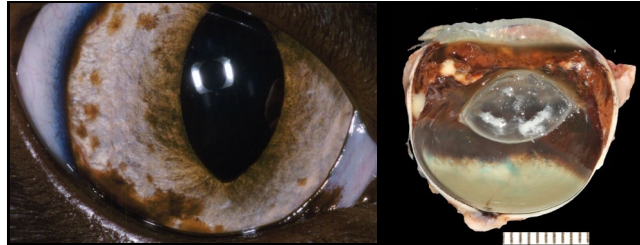



Kalishman, Chappell, Flood, Dubielzig. A matched observational study of survival in cats with enucleation due to diffuse iris melanoma. *Veterinary Ophthalmology* (1998) 1, 1, 25-29

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FDIM Histologic Classification

- FDIM Early
- **FDIM**
- FDIM Extensive

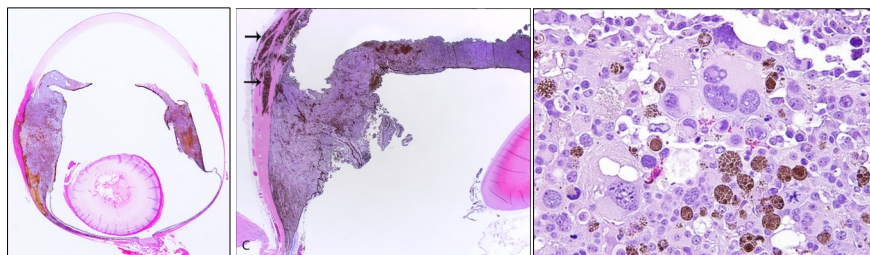


Kalishman, Chappell, Flood, Dubielzig. A matched observational study of survival in cats with enucleation due to diffuse iris melanoma. *Veterinary Ophthalmology* (1998) 1, 1, 25-29

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FDIM Histologic Classification

- FDIM Early
- FDIM
- **FDIM Extensive**

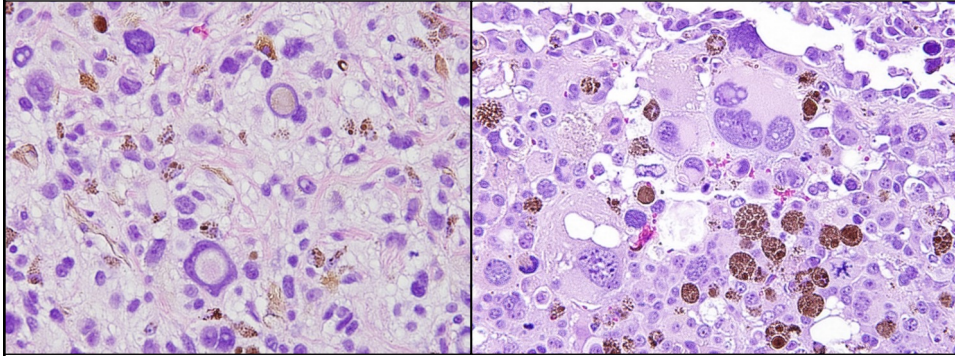


Kalishman, Chappell, Flood, Dubielzig. A matched observational study of survival in cats with enucleation due to diffuse iris melanoma. *Veterinary Ophthalmology* (1998) 1, 1, 25-29

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FDIM Cytologic Features

- Suggests Malignancy
 - Mitotic figures
 - Nuclear atypia



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FDIM Cells

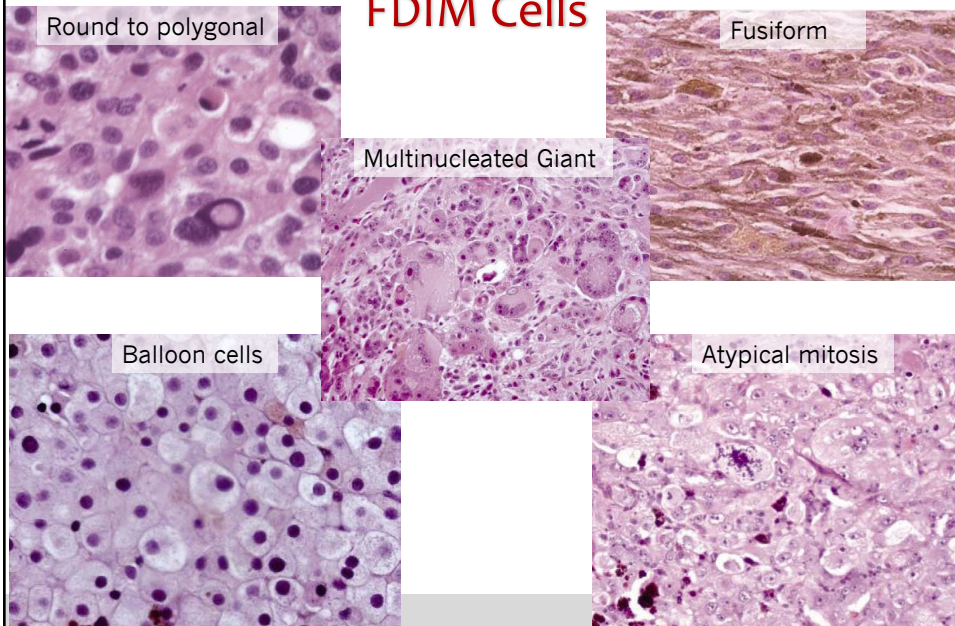
Round to polygonal

Fusiform

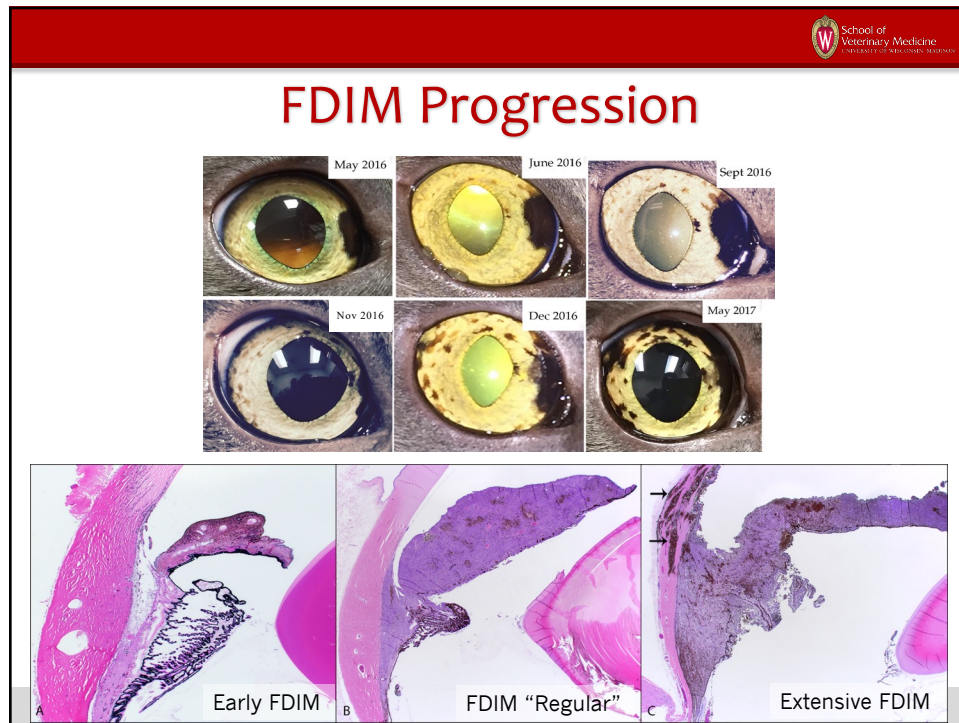
Multinucleated Giant

Balloon cells

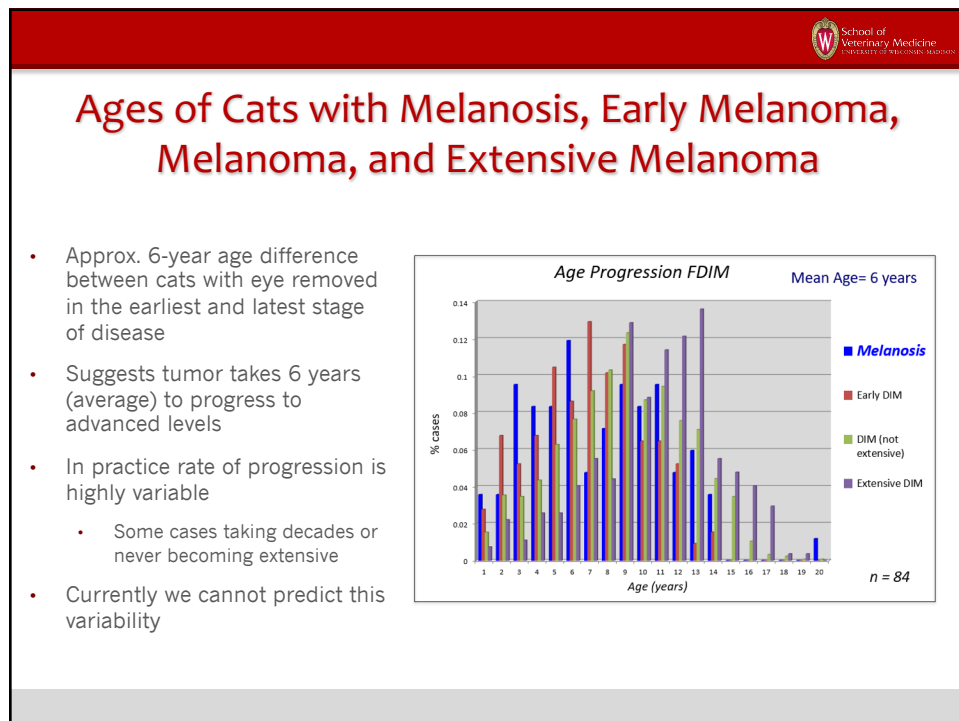
Atypical mitosis



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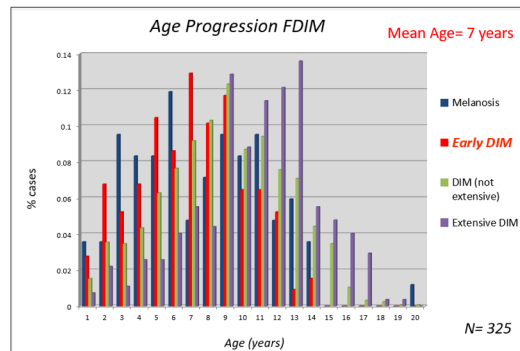
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Ages of Cats with Melanosis, Early Melanoma, Melanoma, and Extensive Melanoma

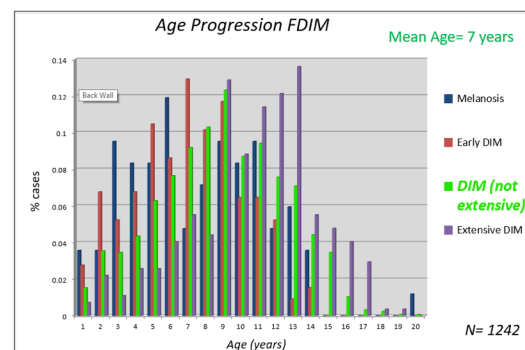
- Approx. 6-year age difference between cats with eye removed in the earliest and latest stage of disease
- Suggests tumor takes 6 years (average) to progress to advanced levels
- In practice rate of progression is highly variable
 - Some cases taking decades or never becoming extensive
- Currently we cannot predict this variability



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Ages of Cats with Melanosis, Early Melanoma, Melanoma, and Extensive Melanoma

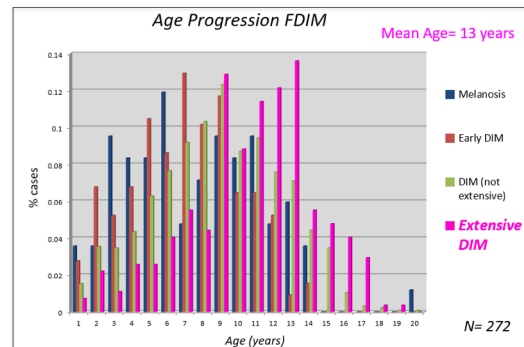
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Ages of Cats with Melanosis, Early Melanoma, Melanoma, and Extensive Melanoma

- Approx. 6-year age difference between cats with eye removed in the earliest and latest stage of disease
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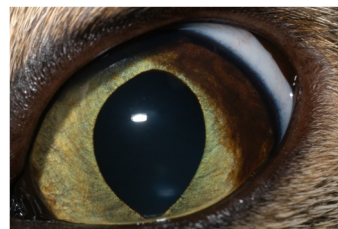
Prognostic Indicators

Clinical

- Secondary glaucoma²

Histologic

- Higher mitotic index^{1,3}
- Areas of necrosis³
- Scleral venous plexus invasion^{1,2}
- Ciliary body stromal or choiroidal and/or intrascleral extension²
- Choroidal or extrascleral extension³
- Confinement to anterior iris improves prognosis^{1,2}

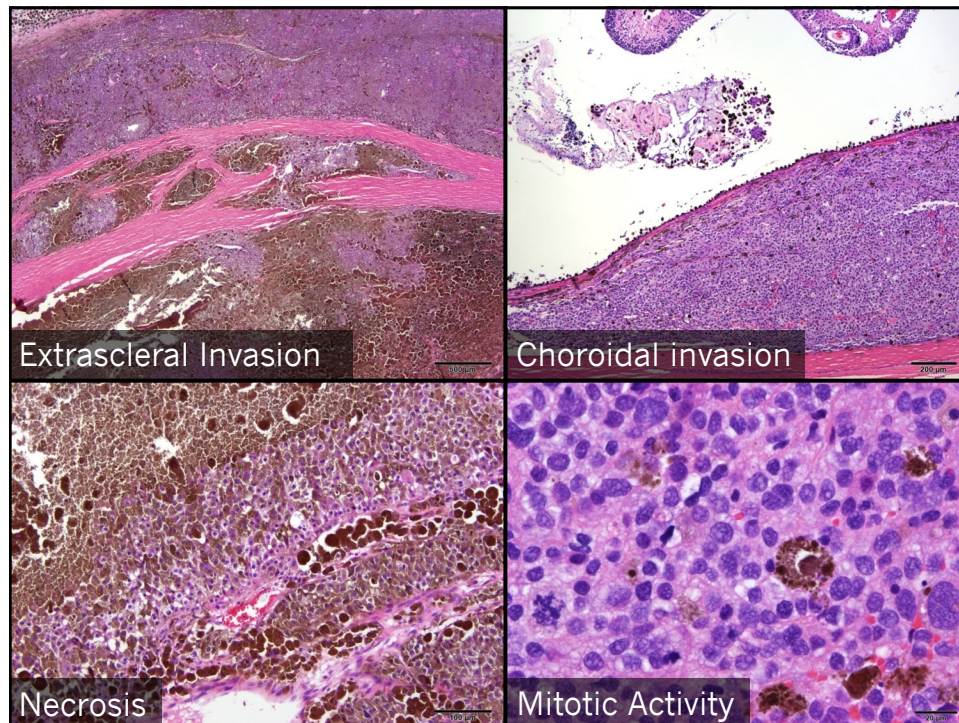


¹ Duncan & Peiffer, 1991

² Kalishman et al, 1998

³ Wiggans et al, 2016

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Metastatic Potential of FDIM

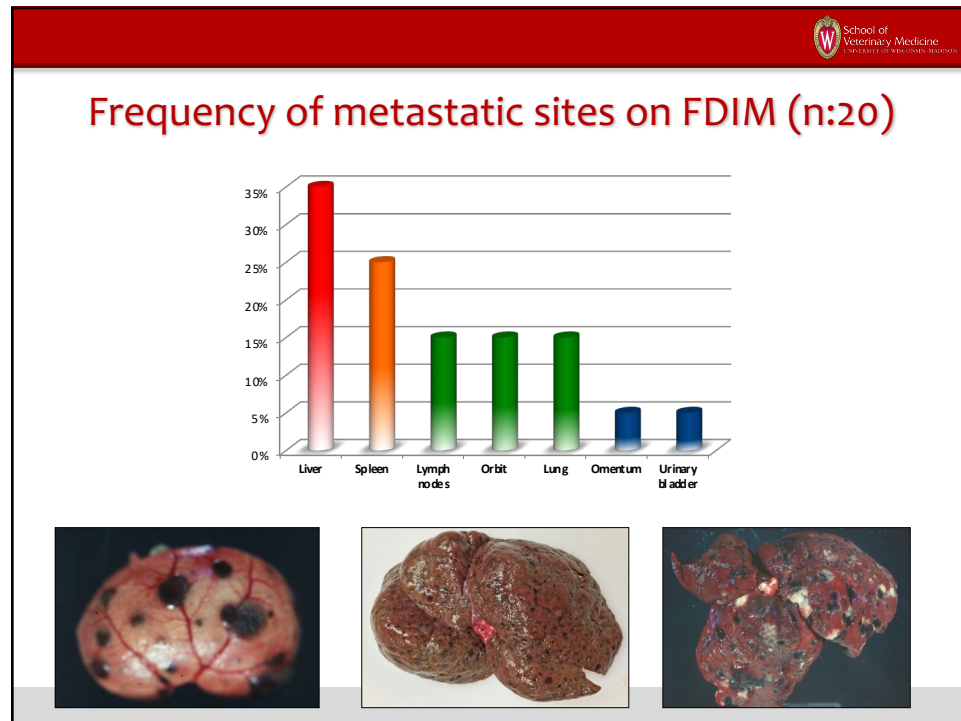
- Metastatic rates of 19-63% have been reported^{5,2}
- Typically to distant organs - liver, lung, spleen, lymph nodes, and bone¹⁻⁴
- Progression and metastasis are unpredictable
 - Some early tumors can metastasize rapidly¹
 - Many extensive neoplasms never metastasize
- **Caveats**
 - Hard to follow up on cats
 - Cases often enucleated early

Distribution of Metastatic FDIM based on the histological subtype (n:20)

Subtype	Count
Early	1
FDIM	6
Extensive	13

1. Patnaik & Mooney. Feline melanoma: a comparative study of ocular, oral, and dermal neoplasms. *Veterinary Pathology* 1988; 25:105-112.
 2. Duncan & Peiffer. Morphology and prognostic indicators of anterior uveal melanoma in cats. *Progress in Veterinary and Comparative Ophthalmology* 1991; 1:25-32.
 3. Kalishman *et al.* A matched observational study of survival in cats with enucleation due to diffuse iris melanoma. *Veterinary Ophthalmology* 1998; 1:25-29.
 4. Planellas *et al.* Unusual presentation of a metastatic uveal melanoma in a cat. *Veterinary Ophthalmology* 2010; 13: 391-394.
 5. Wiggins *et al.* Histologic and immunohistochemical predictors of clinical behavior for feline diffuse iris melanoma. *Vet Ophthalmol.* 2016 Jul;19 Suppl 1:44-55.

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Pitfalls of Interpretation

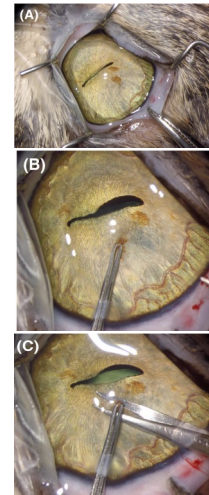
- Location of biopsy
- Area of sectioning of globe
 - Multifocal lesions
- Poorly pigmented or poorly differentiated tumors
 - Differentials
 - IHC

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Iris biopsy FDIM

COPLOW numbers

- Iris biopsies in cats – 37 cases
 - Melanocytic lesions (FDIM or Melanosis) - 34
 - FDIM – 30
 - Feline melanosis – 3
 - Non-diagnostic – 1
 - Biopsy + Enucleation – 14 cases
 - All biopsies diagnosed as FDIM
 - Enucleation
 - Early FDIM – 6
 - Regular FDIM – 8



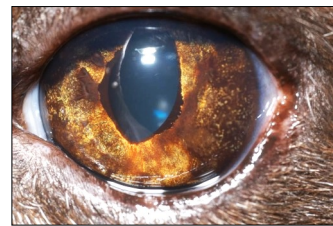
Images from: Featherstone et al. 2020 Vet Ophthalmol.

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Iris biopsy FDIM

Diagnostic limitations

- Limited anatomical distribution
 - Melanosis vs Melanoma
- Size of samples
 - Orientation during embedding
 - Multiple step sections
- Representative tissue
- Handling artifact

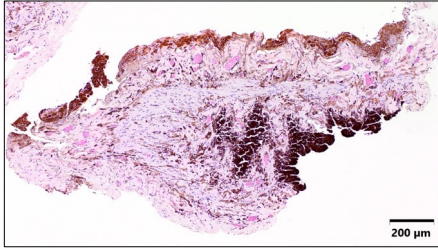


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Iris biopsy x Histopathology Correlation

10-year-old, FS, DSH cat

First Biopsy – August 2012 (1 y/o) Dx: Uveal melanosis 	Second Biopsy – June 2021 Dx: Feline diffuse iris melanoma 
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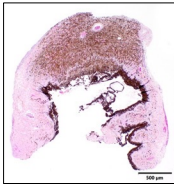
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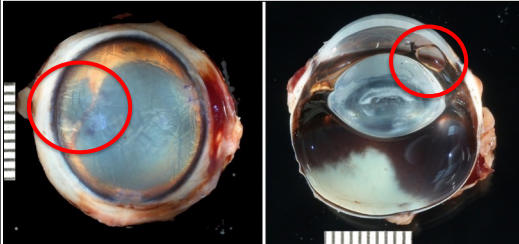
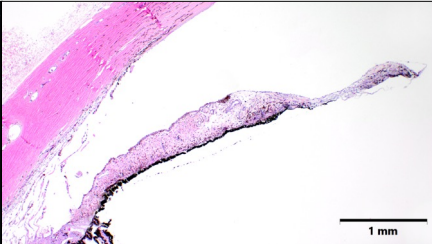
Iris biopsy x Histopathology Correlation

10-year-old, FS, DSH cat

Enucleation – November 2021

Dx: Feline diffuse iris melanoma, early



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Veterinary Pathology
 OnlineFirst
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<https://doi.org/10.1177/03009858251403170>

Diagnostic value of iris biopsies for the assessment of iris pigment changes and diffuse iris melanoma (DIM) in cats: A descriptive histopathological study

Sabine Beetz ¹, Robert Klopffleisch ¹, Carolina Naranjo², Emma Scurrrell³, Judith Bushe⁴, Annika Lehmbecker⁵, Gerhard Loesenbeck⁶, Sophie E. Merz⁵, Hannah Pischon⁵, Ingo Spitzbarth⁵, Birgit Müller⁷, Katharina Thieme ¹, Sixta Wellen⁸, and J. Corinna Eule ¹

- Iris biopsies can a useful diagnostic tool for identifying FDIM
- **Sample size, quality, and tissue handling** - Heavily influence diagnostic value of biopsies
- Early FDIM 79.7% concordance
- Advanced FDIM 91.1% concordance

Clinicians must weigh the benefits and limitations of iris biopsies in their decision-making process on a case-by-case basis



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Feline choriociliary melanoma (FCCM)

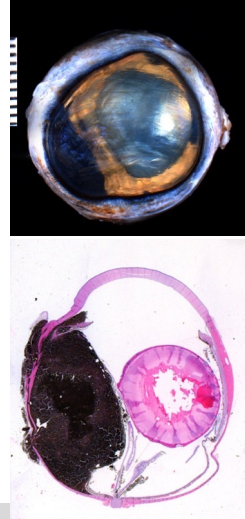
Atypical Primary Ocular Melanoma

Definition

- Uncommon variant of uveal melanoma in cats
 - “Unusual” distribution ≠ FDIM
 - Primarily affect the ciliary body, choroid and retina
 - Bland, heavily pigmented cellular morphology

COPLOW numbers

- 93 cases in the COPLOW collection
- $\cong$ 1% of all feline neoplasms
- No breed or sex predisposition.
- Median age of 12 years old (range 5-18).
- Both eyes are affected equally.



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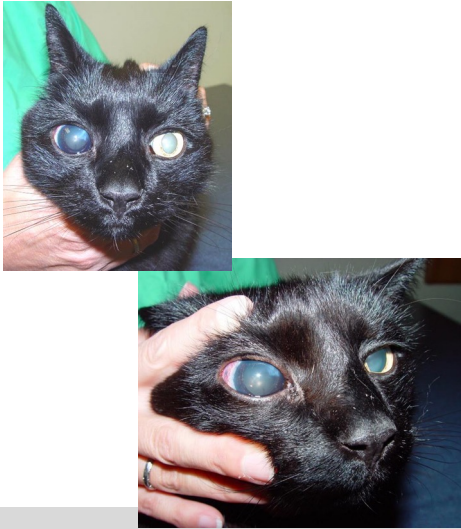
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Feline choriociliary melanoma (FCCM)

Atypical Primary Ocular Melanoma

Clinical presentation

- Focal heavily pigmented mass in the **ciliary body and posterior segment** +/- iris.
- Retinal detachment and glaucoma is common.

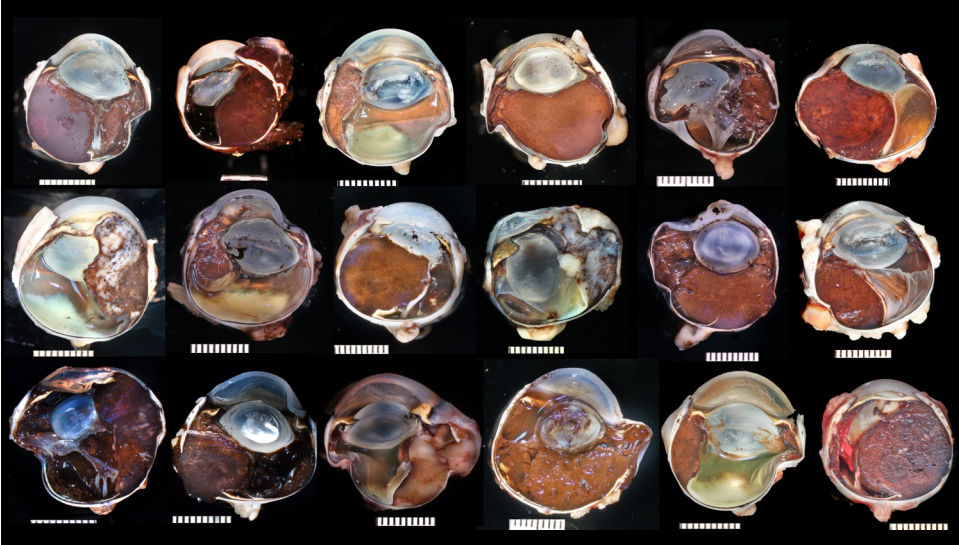


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Feline choriociliary melanoma (FCCM)

Gross Appearance

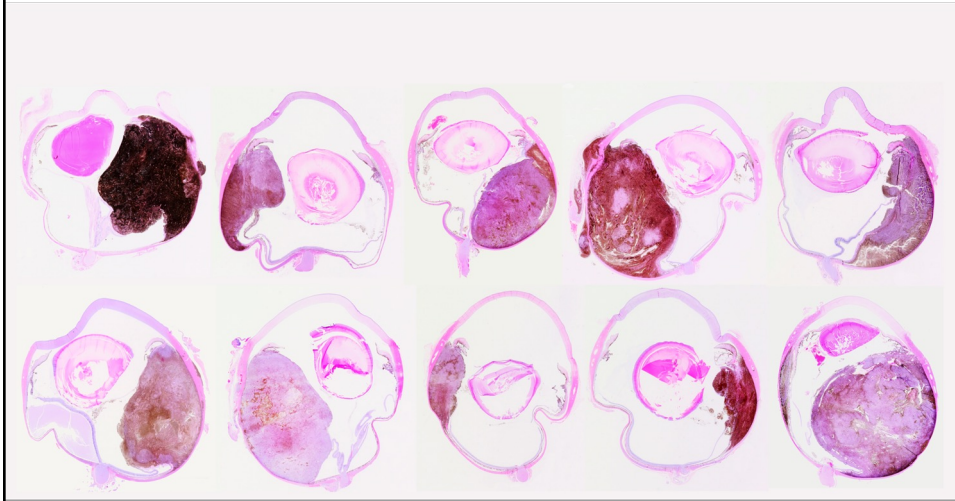


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Feline choriociliary melanoma (FCCM)

Atypical Primary Ocular Melanoma

Subgross



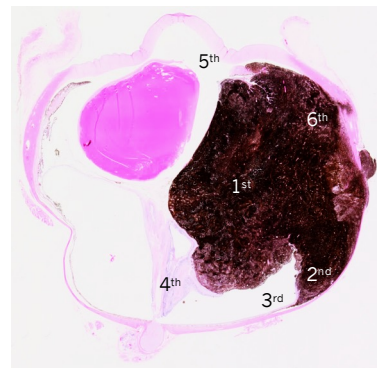
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Feline choriociliary melanoma (FCCM)

Atypical Primary Ocular Melanoma

Neoplasia distribution

Tissue	N cases affected (/87)	%
Ciliary body	86	98.8
Choroid	85	97.7
RPE	83	95.4
Retina/sub-retinal space	72	82.8
Iris*	58	66.7
Iridocorneal angle	40	46.0



* Extension from the posterior mass - Base of the iris or iris effacement
Not anterior iris surface down like FDIM

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Atypical Feline Diffuse iris Melanoma

Subgross



- Heavily pigmented mass
- Ciliary body and posterior
- Sparing of iris
- Retinal detachment and subretinal neoplastic clumps

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Feline choriociliary melanoma (FCCM)

Atypical Primary Ocular Melanoma

Prognosis

- Follow-up received for 32/87 (36%) cases (*ongoing*)
- **Local recurrence – 3/32 (9%)**
 - All 3 had dirty surgical margins on histopath*
 - All 3 recured in the orbit

<u>Survival</u> • 21/32 (65%) Still alive at last contact • 6/32 (19%) Dead • 5/6 euthanized due to tumor-related reasons • 1/6 died due to chronic kidney disease Median survival time after enuc. 326 days* (152-608 days)*$\approx$10 months	<u>Metastasis</u> • 10/32 (31%) - Signs of metastatic disease • 4/6 Confirmed metastasis (biopsy/cytology least one organ) <i>Skin, liver, regional LN, lungs and spleen</i> • 6/6 Suspected metastasis (Metastatic pattern on imaging) <i>Lungs, liver and spleen</i> • 10/32 (31%) No signs of mets at last contact • 12/32 (38%) No info on metastatic status
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Feline choriociliary melanoma (FCCM)

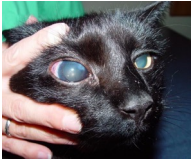
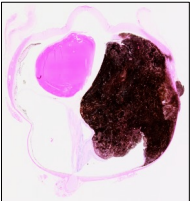
Atypical Primary Ocular Melanoma

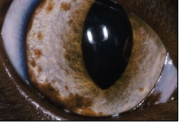
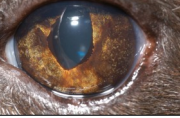
Conclusions

- In contrast to FDIMs:
 - FCCM present as a localized mass with bland cellular features
 - Primarily affect the ciliary body, choroid and retina
 - Worst prognosis
 - Higher metastatic rates (31%)
 - Invasion and local recurrence

Propose a new nome: **Feline choriociliary melanoma**

FCCM vs FDIM


Pang DH, Shaw GC, Teixeira LBC. Clinicopathologic study of feline ocular choriociliary melanomas: a retrospective study. 2025 ACVP Annual Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana.

 **1st Place, Veterinary Student Poster Award (Natural Disease)**

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Equine Intraocular Melanocytic Neoplasia (EIMN)

- Benign appearing melanocytic neoplasm
 - Often diagnosed as melanoma (no obvious reason)
- Most common intraocular tumor in horses
- 86 cases in the COPLOW database
- Arabian was the most common breed (27%)¹
- Gray was the most common coat color (85%)¹

1. Labelle AL, Gemensky Metzler AM, McMullen RJ Jr, Wiggins KT, Labelle P, Hamor RE. Equine intraocular melanocytic neoplasia. Can Vet J. 2024 Oct;65(10):1048-1054.

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Equine Intraocular Melanocytic Neoplasia (EIMN)

- Equine melanoma - multicentric disease.
 - 67% have cutaneous melanoma¹
 - Gray horses are overrepresented
 - Up to 80% of horses affected in some breeds.
 - Autosomal dominant gene syntaxin-17 (STX17)^{2,3}
 - Controls gray coat color
 - Strongly associated with melanoma formation
 - Lipizzaner horses
 - Gene DPF3 - Candidate for development of melanoma⁴
 - Gray Quarter horses⁵
 - Melanoma prevalence and severity is lower than other breeds⁵

1. Labelle AL, et al. Equine intraocular melanocytic neoplasia. Can Vet J. 2024 Oct;65(10):1048-1054.
2. Seltenhammer, et al. Equine melanoma in a population of 296 grey Lipizzaner horses. Equine Vet J 2003;35:153-157.
3. Curik I, et al. Complex inheritance of melanoma and pigmentation of coat and skin in grey horses. PLoS Genet 2013;9:e1003248.
4. Druml T, et al. DPF3, a putative candidate gene for melanoma etiopathogenesis in gray horses. J Equine Vet Sci 2022;108:103797.
5. Teixeira RB et al. Coat color genotypes and risk and severity of melanoma in gray quarter horses. J Vet Intern Med 2013;27:1201-1208.

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Equine Intraocular Melanocytic Neoplasia (EIMN)

- Iris most commonly affected
 - But can originate anywhere in the uvea
 - Some cases appear to originate in the *corpora nigra*
 - Few (11 cases) exclusively limbal/episcleral

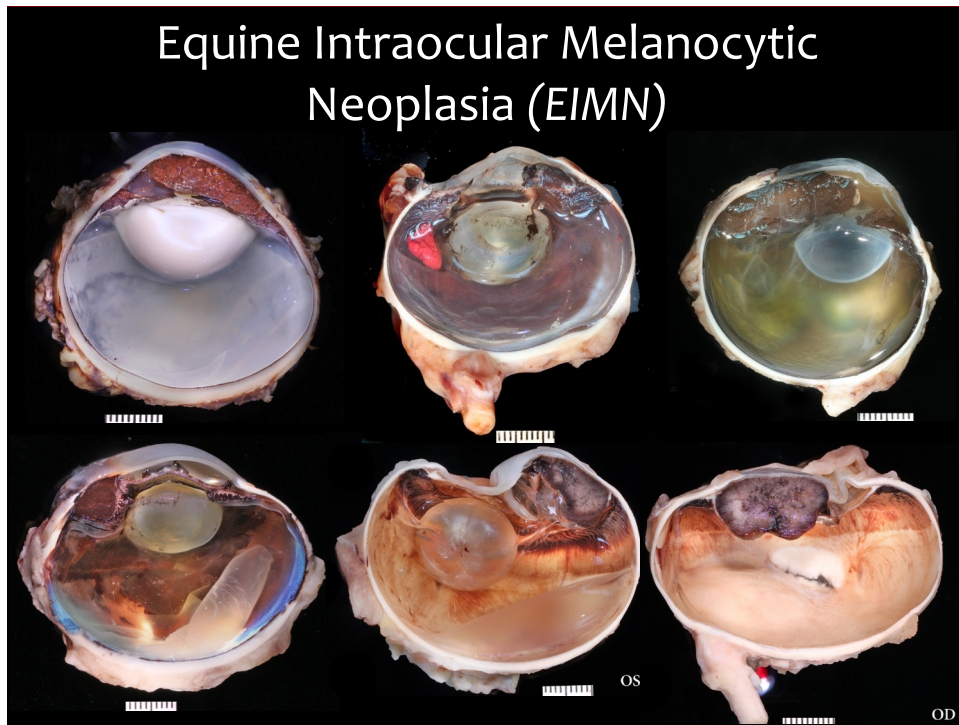


Allison Fuchs

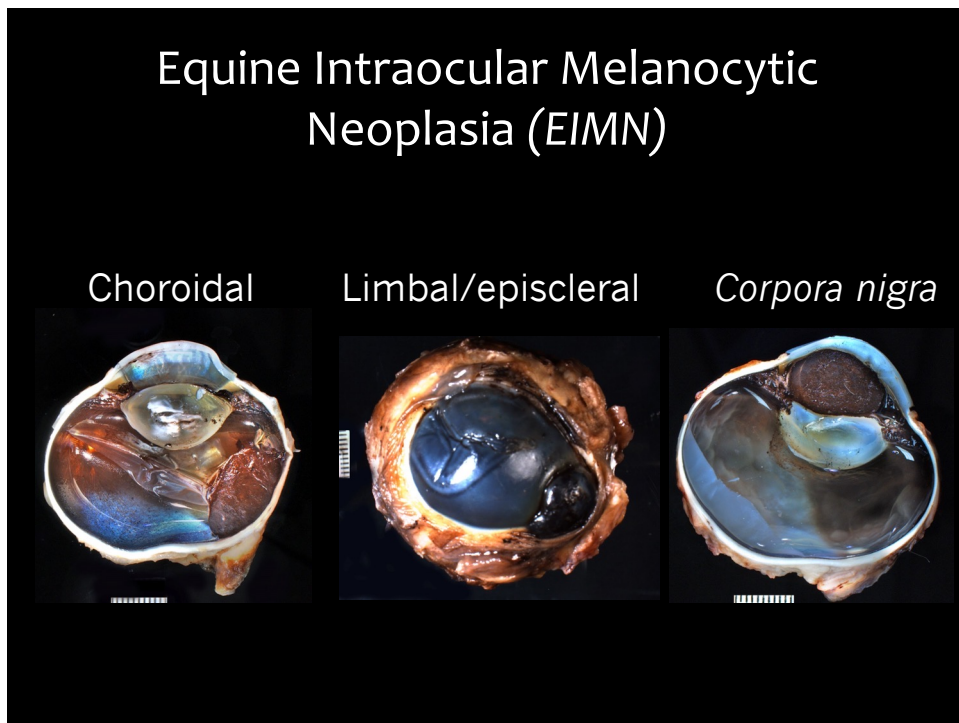


Brittany Martabaro

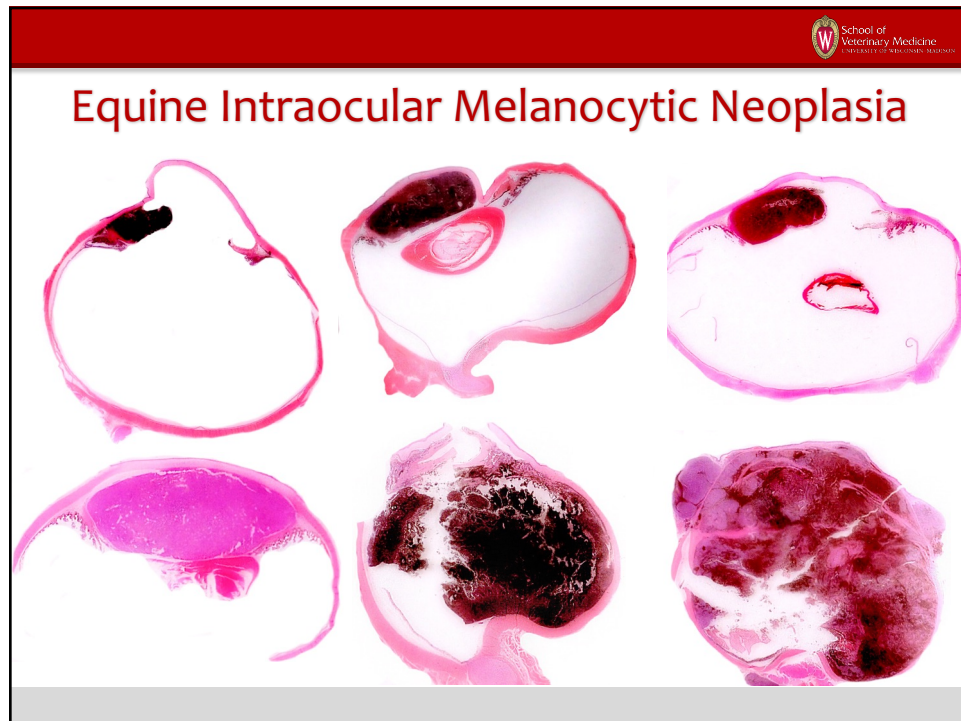
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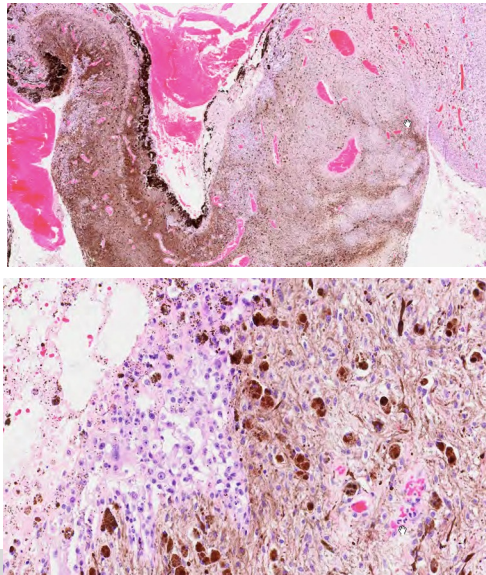


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Equine Intraocular Melanocytic Neoplasia

- Mixed cell type, low mitotic index
- Necrosis/melanophages,
 - Preiridal fibrovascular membranes,
 - Pigment in corneal endothelium



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