

Equine Ophthalmology Care Inspires Children's Book

At UC Davis, difficult health issues and limited treatment options are challenges faced by the professional teams on a daily basis.

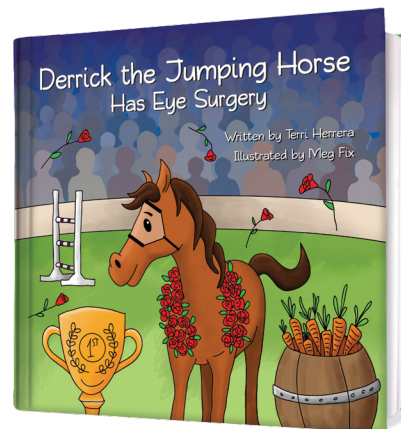
Derrick, an 8-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding, developed cataracts in both eyes. As a talented jumper that owner Terri Herrera planned to convert to a hunter, Derrick's intended career didn't allow much room for imperfect vision. After consulting with her veterinarian in Southern California, Herrera decided to make the 8-hour drive north to see the equine ophthalmology experts at the UC Davis veterinary hospital. It was there that she met Dr. Mary Lassaline, whom she credits with saving Derrick's life.

On Derrick's initial visit to Davis, Lassaline elected to insert cyclosporine implants into each eye. These implants delivered therapeutic levels of cyclosporine to the eye, thus decreasing the frequency and severity of uveitis flare-ups. After a two-night stay, Derrick left the hospital and soon returned to work. Although the vision in his right eye was compromised, he was able to compete successfully that season in the hunter division with vision only in his left eye. Herrera praises Lassaline's work, stating that without Lassaline's intervention, she would never have seen Derrick show, an experience she greatly treasures.

Several months later, however, Derrick's vision worsened. A mature cataract in his left eye threatened blindness. Believing nothing could be done, Herrera made the heart-wrenching decision to euthanize him and canceled Derrick's future appointment at the hospital, explaining the situation. Within minutes, Lassaline called her back, determined to save Derrick's life. Derrick spent the next 40 days at the hospital receiving cataract surgery and continual care from the veterinarians, technicians and students.

Despite their best efforts, Derrick ultimately lost his vision. Herrera considers the surgery and her entire experience at UC Davis to be an overwhelming success, however, because it certainly saved Derrick's life. In fact, she was inspired to write a children's book based on Derrick's ordeal to encourage others. Proceeds from *Derrick the Jumping Horse Has Eye Surgery* will be donated to the hospital's Equine Ophthalmology Service and to pediatric uveitis research.

Herrera views this book, available March 17 on www.derrickthehorse.com, as part of Derrick's new purpose. He continues to be Herrera's special equine companion and she hopes his story will inspire others.



Proceeds from the children's book will benefit the Equine Ophthalmology Service.