



Animal Eye Clinic

of Waterloo Region

405 Maple Grove Road, Unit 14
Cambridge, Ontario N3E 1B6
Ph: 519.654.2040
Fax: 519.658.5060
Email: office@myeyevet.ca
www.myeyevet.ca

Dr Nick Whelan BVSc, MVSc, MACVSc, Diplomate ACVO & ACVCP

EYELASH DISORDERS

What are eyelash disorders?

Eyelash disorders can be classified into three different categories:

Distichiasis

Distichia are small hairs (cilia) that grow from or near the meibomian glands located on the inner surface of the eyelid margin. These cilia are often in direct contact with the cornea. In most cases, the cilia are soft and fine and don't cause any irritation. However, if the hairs are stiff or coarse, or if they are present in large numbers, they may cause irritation to the cornea.

Ectopic Cilia

Ectopic cilia are hairs that grow on the inside surface of the eyelid, away from the lid margin. This growth causes great irritation to the cornea and is extremely painful. The amount of discomfort the animal feels depends on the number of abnormal cilia and their texture, fine or coarse. Corneal ulcers caused by ectopic cilia are common, and will not resolve until the cilia are removed.

Trichiasis

Trichiasis describes hair growing from a normal site that comes into regular contact with the cornea or the conjunctiva. The hairs irritate the cornea, and cause corneal damage and discomfort to the animal. Permanent removal of the hair will alleviate the problem.

What causes eyelash disorders?

Eyelash disorders are common in dogs, especially young dogs. Some breeds are predisposed to eyelash disorders because of their facial conformation or genetics.

Breeds commonly affected by distichia include:

Airedale Terrier	Doberman Pinscher	Poodle*
American Cocker Spaniel▽	English Cocker Spaniel	Pomeranian
Australian Shepherd	French Bulldog	Portuguese Water Dog
Border Collie	German Shepherd	Pug▽
Boxer	Golden Retriever	Rottweiler
Bulldog*▽	Great Dane	Saint Bernard
Bullmastiff*	Japanese Chin	Samoyed
Cavalier King Charles Span.	Labrador Retriever	Shetland Sheepdog
Chesapeake Bay Retriever	Lhasa Apso*	Shih Tzu*▽
Collie	N.S. Duck Tolling Retriever	Weimaraner
Dachshund	Old English Sheepdog	Yorkshire Terrier
Dalmatian	Pekingese*▽	

*Breeds commonly affected by ectopic cilia, as well as Brussels Griffon.

▽Breeds commonly affected by trichiasis, as well as Persian cats.

What will I see if my dog has one of these conditions?

All of the eyelash disorders present in a similar manner. The animal may show signs of discomfort including: pain, squinting (blepharospasm), excessive blinking, excessive tearing (epiphora), corneal ulceration, and/or corneal pigmentation. In all cases it is usually difficult to visualize the cilia without bright light and magnification.

How will my dog be treated for this condition?

Distichiasis is only treated when it becomes irritating to the eye. There are a number of methods for removing the cilia including: plucking the hairs with forceps under magnification (high incidence of regrowth), using cryotherapy to freeze the hair follicles and then removing the hair with forceps (low incidence of regrowth), or laser therapy of the hair follicles and removal of the hair (no incidence of regrowth). It must be noted that multiple treatments may be necessary in order to remove all hairs, as some may be dormant at the time of the initial treatment. All procedures will be done under general anesthetic, except for plucking which may only require sedation.

Ectopic cilia are removed by surgical excision under general anesthesia. In some cases, cryotherapy or laser therapy will be applied to the site to destroy the follicle. Regrowth may occur at other sites if there are dormant follicles at the time of the initial treatment.

Occasionally trichiasis can be managed by keeping the hair on the animal's face clipped short.

However, there are a number of surgical procedures that can be performed to remedy the specific situation, including: facial fold removal, laser hair removal, or injections which will temporarily roll the offending hair away from the eye (lasts 6-8 weeks/treatment).