

Ophthalmology Information Sheet

Cherry Eye

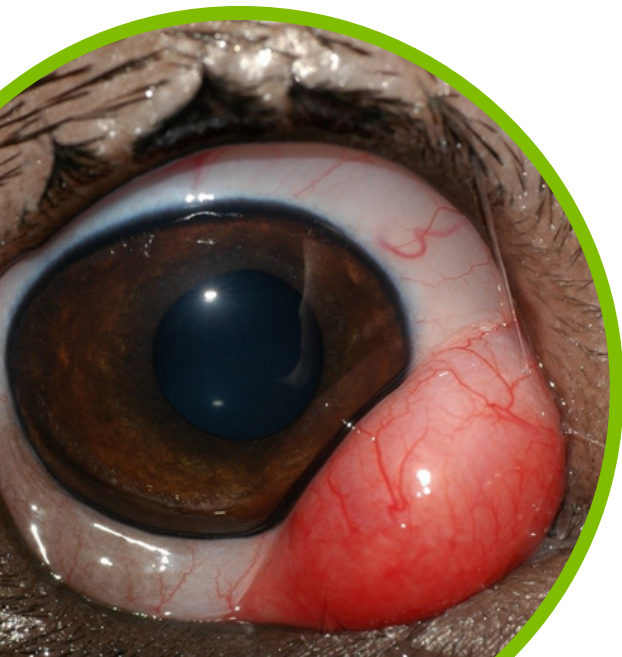
Introduction

The nictitating membrane, commonly known as the third eyelid, is a thin translucent membrane that is present in the eyes of dogs. The nictitating gland is located at the base of this membrane, and it produces an important secretion that lubricates and protects the surface of the eye as part of the tear film. Nictitans gland prolapse (NGP) – also known as ‘cherry eye’ - is a condition in which the nictitating gland protrudes or prolapses from its normal position.

The exact cause of NGP in dogs is unknown, but it is believed to be due to weakness or damage to the connective tissue that supports the gland. The condition is more common in certain breeds, such as Cocker Spaniels, Beagles, Bulldogs, and Shih Tzus, and it is often seen in young dogs.

Clinical Signs

The most obvious symptom of NGP is the protrusion of the nictitating gland from the corner of the eye. The gland may appear red, swollen, or inflamed, and it may be accompanied by discharge or excessive tearing. Some dogs may also exhibit signs of discomfort in eyes affected by NGP.



Diagnosis and Treatment

NGP is diagnosed by direct observation, with the gland appearing as a pink body of tissue in the inner corner of the eye. One or both eyes can be affected. Where the gland is permanently prolapsed, the aim of treatment is to surgically reposition the gland back into its normal position and prevent recurrence. The gland plays a very important role in the health of the eye surface and its removal

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should absolutely be avoided. Micro-surgical NGP repositioning (using an operating microscope) with self-dissolving sutures is a highly successful, minimally invasive surgery that carries a quick and permanent resolution to the problem, allowing the gland to function normally.

