

This factsheet has been prepared to help you understand distichiasis. Whilst it is hoped this factsheet addresses many concerns you may have, please contact us if you have any further questions regarding the condition.

What is a distichiasis?

Distichiasis is a medical term for abnormal growth of hairs along the eyelid margins.

What causes distichiasis?

The most likely explanation is a genetic cause. However, the mode of inheritance is not clear.

Can both eyes be affected?

Yes, but may be affected in different ways.

Does distichiasis always cause problems?

No, in the majority of cases distichiae are incidental findings of no clinical significance. However, in some cases, the hairs can cause irritation of the surface of the eye (cornea), in which case surgery is recommended.

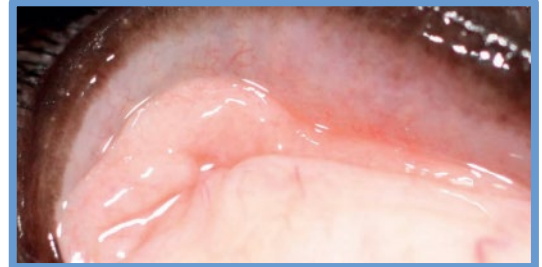
What treatment options do I have?

There are several treatment options for distichiasis, all of which require general anaesthesia and surgery. Even though simple plucking of the hairs may be performed in order to assess the clinical relevance of distichiasis, it is not a permanent solution since the remaining root will continue to produce a new hair within a matter of a few weeks. Surgical treatments to resolve the problem include:

- removal of the roots of the distichiae
- freezing inside the eyelids to damage the roots of the distichiae
- low voltage electric current to destroy the base of the distichiae using the high magnification provided by the operating microscope.

Can distichiasis return after surgery?

Since we can only remove the roots of hairs which are visible, there is a risk of further development of distichiasis adjacent to the hair follicles which have been removed. However, the risk of recurrence is lower in dogs older than 2½ years as distichiae tend to develop in the early years of life.



Are any breeds predisposed?

The most commonly affected breeds include: American Cocker Spaniel, English Cocker Spaniel, Welsh Springer Spaniel, Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Flat-Coated Retriever, Boxer, English Bulldog, Havanese, Shetland Sheepdog, Shih Tzu, Pekingese, Tibetan Terrier, Dachshund, Poodle & Jack Russell Terrier.

