

Ophthalmology Information Sheet

Distichia

Introduction

Distichiasis is not an uncommon condition in dogs, where an additional row of eyelashes grows abnormally along the eyelid margin (which would normally be a hair free zone).

Distichiasis has been reported in dogs as young as 6 weeks old and most commonly affects dogs in early adulthood. Distichiasis is considered a genetic disorder that can occur in any breed of dog. However, it is more commonly seen in certain breeds, including the American Cocker Spaniel, English Cocker Spaniel, Shih Tzu, Miniature Longhaired Dachshund, and Weimaraner.

Clinical Signs

The symptoms of distichiasis can vary depending on the severity of the condition. In some dogs, the extra eyelashes may not cause any noticeable problems. However, in others, they can rub against the surface of the eye, leading to irritation, redness, discomfort and discharge. In severe cases, they can cause corneal ulcers and scarring, which can affect eyesight.

Dogs with distichiasis may also exhibit the following signs:

- Rubbing or pawing at the eye
- Watery or mucoid discharge
- Frequent blinking
- Squinting or closing one eye

Treatment

Different surgical techniques for permanent treatment of distichiasis are available including non-invasive (cryotherapy), minimally invasive (electroepilation), and more invasive techniques (such as partial tarsal plate excision). The severity, location and impact of the distichiae will influence the approach to treatment.

