

Eyelash disorders

One of the most common causes of canine ocular disease is the presence of abnormal eyelashes, which rub on the surface of the eye causing discomfort and irritation.

They can affect one or both eyes and are often seen early in life. Cats are less commonly affected.

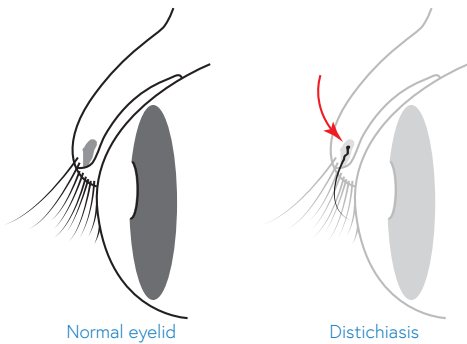
What are the clinical signs?

Clinical signs of eyelash disorders depend on the severity and include:

- Increased blinking rate (blepharospasm)
- Rubbing at the eye, holding the eye closed or general irritation
- Increased tear production (epiphora)
- Red eyes (conjunctival hyperaemia)
- Corneal ulcers
- Corneal pigmentation

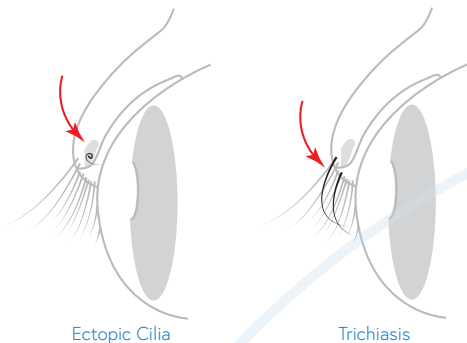


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Normal eyelid

Distichiasis



Ectopic Cilia

Trichiasis

Distichiasis: These abnormal eyelashes emerge from the openings of the meibomian glands (multiple glands along the rim of the eyelids) and may come in contact with the cornea causing discomfort. If the lashes are long and soft, it is often an incidental finding with no clinical signs of discomfort. If the lashes are thick and touch the cornea, your dog may have significant discomfort. This can lead to corneal erosion and corneal ulcers.

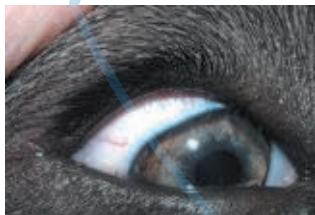
Ectopic cilium (plural: cilia): These are abnormal lashes which grow from the same meibomian glands along the eyelid margin, but which grow through the conjunctiva to scratch the eye surface directly. They are very difficult to find without magnification, and therefore often require the use of specialist equipment to locate them. They cause more severe painful disease than distichia and usually result in deep corneal ulcers and may affect one or both eyes. The corneal ulcer/s will not heal until the ectopic cilia has been surgically removed.

Trichiasis: These are normal but misdirected hairs which rub on the eye. Although they can be caused by entropion (inward rolling of the eyelids), prominent nasal folds, eyelid coloboma or as a congenital abnormality, they can also be present without. Removal of these hairs via surgery or cryotherapy is needed to remove trichiasis.

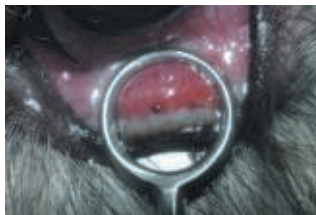
What are the causes?

All of these are usually linked to a breed predisposition or facial conformation. They are frequent in dogs but rare in cats. Any breed may be affected but some show a higher prevalence: Pekingese, English/French Bulldog, Pug, Cocker Spaniel, Shih Tzu, Lhasa Apso, etc.

How are they treated?



Distichiasis on both the upper and lower lids



Ectopic cilia present in the upper lid of a 10 month old Shih Tzu.



Medial trichiasis in a Shih Tzu.

Distichiasis: The hair follicles are destroyed by cryoepilation (freezing), thermoepilation (heating) or electroepilation (using a small electrical current) under the surgical microscope and general anesthesia. In a small number of cases (around 2%) the hairs may regrow especially in predisposed breeds, therefore requiring additional or repeat surgery.

Ectopic cilium: Surgical removal of the cilia under high magnification and general anaesthetic is required. If the corneal erosion caused by the cilia is deep, a corneal graft may also be required.

Trichiasis: Surgical correction of the deformity causing the trichiasis is recommended under general anaesthetic. This includes entropion surgery and/or nasal fold surgery.

Please do not hesitate to contact **eye-vet** should you have any concerns or doubts about the treatment or the post-op appearance of the eye.