

Nictitans Gland Prolapse

'Cherry Eye'



What is 'Cherry Eye'?

Dogs and cats have a 'third eyelid' known as the nictitans membrane. This has a protective function as it can cover the surface of the eye to prevent trauma or foreign material from contacting the eye's delicate surface. It also has a gland at its base which is responsible for producing approximately 30% of the eye's tears. 'Cherry eye' occurs when the gland pops up from the base of the third eyelid due to laxity of the attaching ligaments and overcrowding of structures within the orbit.

Which breeds are at risk of developing Cherry eye?

Brachycephalic breeds appear over-represented, such as English Bulldogs, Shih-Tzu, French Bulldog and Persian cats. Many other breeds can be seen with the condition and it often occurs in younger animals. The condition can occur in both eyes however it is unusual for both glands to prolapse at the same time.

Is my pet in pain?

The condition is not painful however the longer the gland is exposed the more likely it is to become inflamed and traumatised, and for tear production to be affected resulting in dry eye.

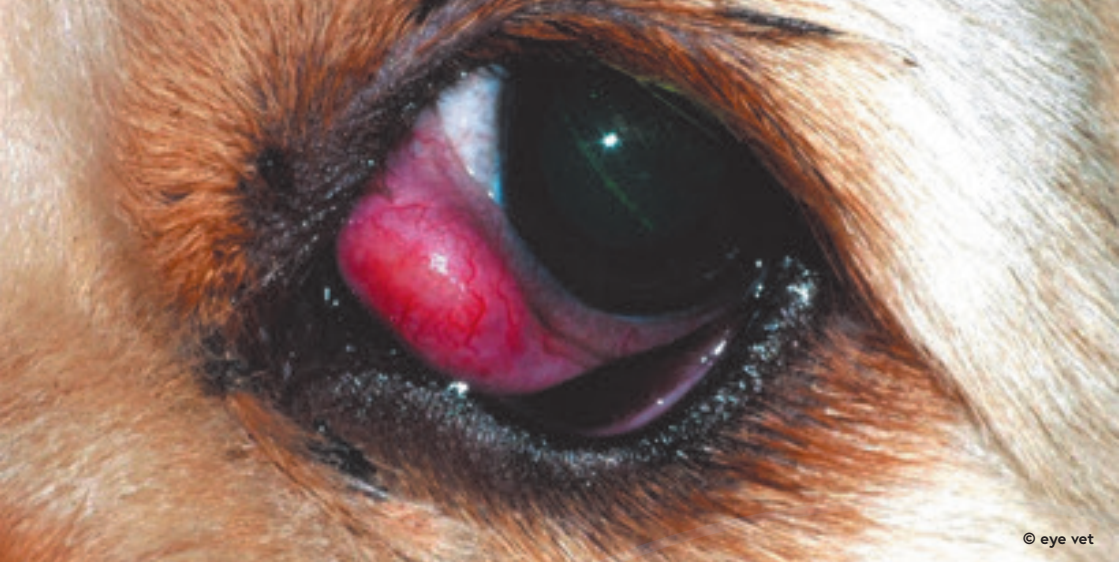


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How is Cherry eye treated?

Treatment involves surgical replacement of the gland under general anaesthesia. The most common surgical technique used is the 'pocketing technique', however other techniques do exist involving anchoring the gland to other structures within the orbit, or a combination of anchoring and pocketing. Stitches will often be dissolvable.

No technique is 100% effective however, and approximately 10% of patients require repeated surgery.

Again brachycephalic breeds such as the English Bulldog appear to be one of the more common breeds needing repeated procedures.

Removal of the gland is only advised if we are concerned about cancer in this area, as patients often go on to develop dry eye if the glands have been removed which requires lifelong treatment.

Aftercare

Following surgery your pet must wear a buster collar for the first few weeks and you will be required to administer eye-drops and pain relief by mouth in the short-term. This is to prevent complications such as post-operative infection, self-trauma and minimise inflammation. It is recommended to keep your dog quiet (no excessive playing/running) to allow time for the surgical site to heal. Follow up consultations with our ophthalmologists are required to ensure the wound is healing as expected and the gland is stable in its original position.

Scrolled cartilage

This condition has a very similar appearance to a cherry eye, and it is often seen with a prolapsed gland. The cartilage frame inside the third eyelid is in a T-shape, with a broad vertical band leading up to a thin horizontal portion. In some breeds, the broad vertical section kinks and this folds the third eyelid. The most commonly affected breeds are large dogs such as a Great Danes, Weimeraners, Staint Bernards and Newfoundlands. Surgery correction can be performed to resolve the scrolled cartilage under general anaesthesia.



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Please do not hesitate to contact Eye Vet should you have any concerns following treatment.