

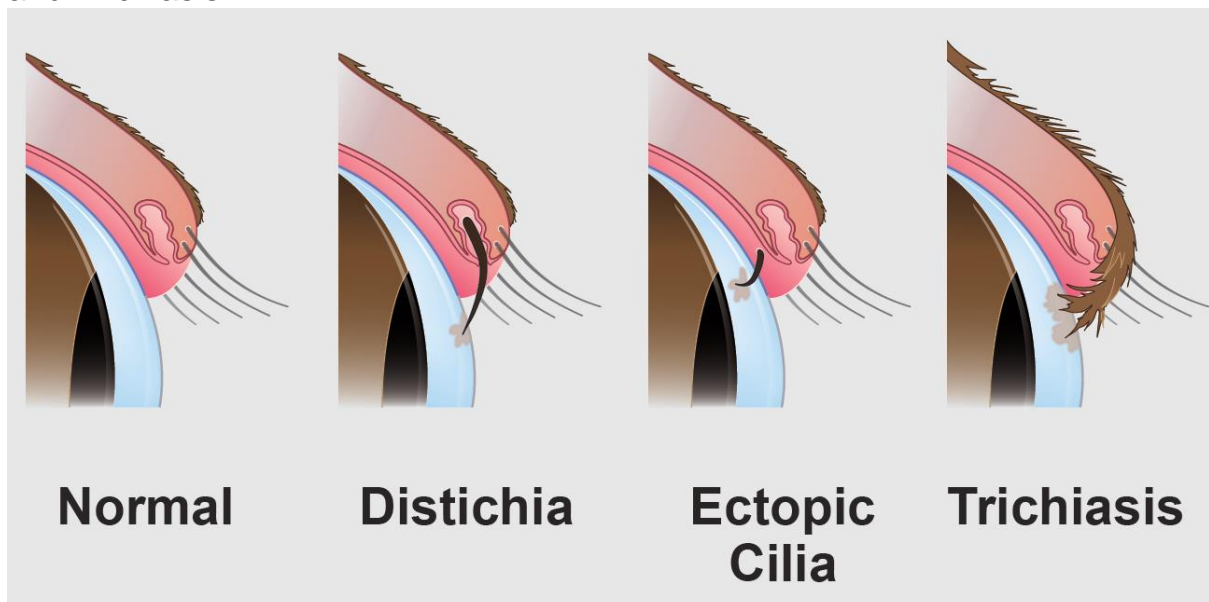
Eyelash Problems in Dogs

Overview

- Eyelashes growing in the wrong place or direction often rub the front of the eye, cause irritation, pain and damage.
- Left untreated, abnormal lashes can lead to severe problems such as corneal ulcers, scarring and even loss of vision.
- Problem eyelashes can be difficult to see with the naked eye, but tend to cause symptoms such as weeping, pain and redness.
- Fortunately, problem eyelashes can usually be removed.
- Contact your vet ASAP if your dog has a problem with their eyelashes.

General information

The three main eyelash problems we see in dogs are Distichiasis, Ectopic cilia and Trichiasis.



Distichiasis - extra eyelashes that grow just behind the normal eyelashes (from a gland called the 'Meibomian gland'). In some dogs, these extra

lashes don't cause an issue, but in others they rub and irritate the surface of the eye.

Ectopic cilia - extra eyelashes that grow from underneath the eyelid and rub the eye.

Trichiasis - normal fur or eyelashes that grow in the wrong direction and rub the eye. Trichiasis is common in breeds that have flat faces, skin folds close to their eyes or very floppy skin.

Symptoms

Abnormal eyelashes aren't often easy to see with the naked eye, but tend to cause the following symptoms:

- [Weepy eye\(s\)](#)
- [Red eye\(s\)](#)
- [Sore or painful eye\(s\)](#)
- Excessive blinking
- [Corneal ulcers](#)
- Scarring on the surface of the eye

Treatment

Fortunately, most problem eyelashes can be removed by:

- **Surgery** - a permanent solution to cut away the lash and its root.
- **Cryotherapy** - permanent removal of the lash by freezing.
- **Electrolysis** - permanent removal of the lash by destroying the root with an electric current passed through a fine wire.
- **Physically removing them** - improves symptoms until they grow back. This isn't usually a long-term solution.

The best method for your dog will depend on the type of stray lashes they have:

Treating distichiasis - trichiasis (lashes that grow behind the normal eyelashes) can be treated by all four methods of lash removal (above). However, removing them can be tricky so your vet may need to refer your dog to a specialist for treatment.

Treating ectopic cilia - ectopic cilia (lashes that grow on the back of the eyelid) are usually best removed surgically, but your vet may also recommend cryotherapy to stop them returning. Similar to distichia, ectopic cilia removal is often performed at a specialist eye hospital.

Treating trichiasis - trichiasis (normal fur or lashes that grow in the wrong direction and rub the eye), is a problem usually caused by excessive skin that pushes fur/eyelashes on to the front of the eye. Treating trichiasis usually involves removing the excessive skin that's causing the problem (for example a nose fold). Your vet might be able to do this, or if your dog's problem is more complicated, they may refer you to an ophthalmologist. In some mild cases, trichiasis can be treated by regularly trimming the problem fur.

Recovery and aftercare

Once your dog has had their abnormal eyelashes removed, they will be sent home with medication to keep them comfortable while they heal. This may include eye ointments, drops or tablets (check out our videos below). If your dog has multiple medications, you may find our [medication timetable](#) helpful. They may also need to wear a protective head cone to stop them scratching/rubbing their eyes (which must be left on until your vet says otherwise). It's likely that your dog will need a check-up 2-3 days after their operation.



Outlook

Fortunately, distichia, ectopic cilia and trichiasis are all very treatable conditions, so your dog's outlook is likely to be good if they are treated before their eye is damaged. Once your dog has been treated, it's important to continue monitoring them throughout life because occasionally, abnormal lashes can re-grow after treatment. It's also possible for your dog to get more than one type of eyelash problem in their lifetime.

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet ASAP if you think your dog may have a problem with their eyelashes. The sooner they are treated, the better their chance of full recovery. Left untreated, eyelash problems can lead to permanent damage, loss of vision and in severe cases, even loss of an eye.

Cost

Treatment for an eyelash problem can become very expensive, especially if your dog needs surgery at a specialist eye hospital. It's important to speak openly to your vet about your finances, the cost of treatment, as well as what you think is right for your dog. There are often several treatment options, so if one doesn't work for you and your pet then the vet may be able to offer another. Consider [insuring your dog](#) as soon as you get them, before any signs of illness start. This will ensure you have all the support you need to care for them.

Am I eligible for PDSA veterinary treatment?

Published: October 2020