

Cherry eye in dogs

Overview

Dogs have a third eyelid that sits in the corner of their eye. It contains a gland that produces tears (this gland can't normally be seen). 'Cherry eye' is a condition in which the gland pops out and sits in in the corner of the eye. It is called 'cherry eye' because it looks like a small cherry.

It's important to get cherry eye treated as soon as possible. Most dogs need surgery to replace the gland.

Always contact your vet if you notice anything wrong with your dog's eyes – they are too important to ignore.



What is cherry eye?

Dogs have an extra eyelid called the third eyelid. It's a thin piece of skin that slides across the front of the eye to provide protection when necessary. It also contains a tear gland.

Cherry eye is when the tear gland inside the third eyelid 'pops out'. Cherry eye is a painful condition because the gland quickly becomes red, angry and sore.

What causes cherry eye?

Cherry eye tends to occur without a particular cause. It can affect any breed of dog, but certain pedigree dogs are much more likely to develop the condition, including:

- British Bulldogs
- French Bulldogs
- Beagle
- Great Dane
- Cocker Spaniel
- Bull Mastiff
- Shar Pei

It is not a good idea to breed from dogs who have had cherry eye.

Symptoms

Cherry eye is easy to spot. It looks like a small cherry (pink – red, round lump) sitting in the corner of the eye (see picture above). It can happen to **one or both** eyes and it usually happens before 1 year of age.

When to contact your vet

Book an appointment with your vet if you suspect they may have cherry eye. Leaving the condition for too long can make it much harder to treat.

You know your dog best. If you are concerned it's always best to contact your vet – eye are too important to leave to chance.

Treatment

Your vet may suggest the following treatment:

Surgery

- Surgery is nearly always necessary. The gland will need to be sewn back into a pocket inside the third eyelid.
- Unfortunately, it's fairly common for the gland to pop back out after surgery and it can take a few attempts to cure it completely. Some dogs may need to visit a specialist eye hospital.
- In the past, surgery was performed to remove the gland. This is **not advised** anymore – the gland is important for producing tears and if it's removed a condition called dry eye can develop.

Eye drops

- Lubricating drops (false tears) may be used to keep the eye moist before and after surgery.
- Antibiotic eye drops may be used to prevent bacterial infections developing in the eye before and after surgery. Your vet won't always advise antibiotic eye drops - they aren't always necessary. If your dog is given antibiotic eye drops, it's very important to follow the instructions and complete the course to make sure the infection doesn't come back.
- Anti-inflammatory eye drops may be used to settle inflammation (swelling) in the eye before and after surgery.
- View our short video "How to: give your dog eye drops" (www.pdsa.org.uk/phh/cherryeyeindogs)

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory tablets or liquids are excellent for reducing pain and inflammation (swelling).

Care after surgery

It is fairly common for a cherry eye to pop out again after surgery. To reduce the chance of this happening take the following precautions:

- Ensure your dog wears a buster collar after surgery – it's vitally important they don't rub or scratch their eye. Don't remove it until your vet says it's ok to do so.
- Avoid any activities that will raise the pressure in your dog's eyes, such as exercise and playing.
- Remove your dog's normal collar and use a harness instead – pressure on their neck can raise the pressure inside their eyes.

Outlook

Most cases of cherry eye can be cured, even if it takes a few surgeries or a visit to a specialist eye hospital.

Important notes:

- If your dog has had cherry eye in one eye they are at risk of developing it in the other.
- Dogs that get cherry eye often get dry eye as well. For this reason, your vet may want to check your dog's tear production from time to time.

Prevention

Cherry eye often runs in the family, so it's not a good idea to breed from a dog that has suffered from the condition.

Cost

Treatment for cherry eye can cost hundreds of pounds. If the surgery needs to be repeated the cost will increase. Think about insuring your dog as soon as you get them, before any signs of illness start, so you have all the support you need to care for them.

It's also very 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 your vet may be able to offer another.

Published: November 2018