



Ectopic Cilia

What are ectopic cilia?

Ectopic cilia are abnormally-directed hairs that grow through the underside of the eyelid and rub on the cornea (the clear surface of the eye). These hairs are most common in young (<2 years of age) Golden Retrievers, Boxers and Shih tzus, but can occur in any breed of dog. They are rare in cats.

What are the signs of ectopic cilia?

Ectopic cilia can cause redness of the eye, increased eye discharge, and signs of eye pain (squinting or rubbing at the eye). In addition, they can result in persistent or recurrent corneal ulceration (an abrasion on the surface of the eye). Any young dog with a non-healing corneal ulcer should be carefully evaluated for ectopic cilia.

How is this condition diagnosed?

Ectopic cilia are diagnosed by visualizing them during ophthalmic examination. These hairs can be quite small, and a good source of magnification is often necessary in order to find them. These hairs must be differentiated from a foreign body that is present in the conjunctiva.

What is the recommended treatment?

Treatment of ectopic cilia generally involves surgery to cut out the hair follicle(s). In some cases, particularly when many ectopic cilia are present, cryotherapy is also used to freeze the site to reduce the risk of recurrence.

Prognosis:

The prognosis after surgery for this condition is very good. However, there is a small chance for re-growth of the hairs, or for new hairs to develop away from the site that was initially treated. If this occurs, a second surgery may be required.