



Cherry Eye (Prolapsed Third Eyelid Gland)

What is a cherry eye?

The third eyelid (nictitating membrane) is a thin portion of tissue found under the inner corner of the lower eyelid of most domestic animals. A gland called the third eyelid gland (nictitating membrane gland or haw) is located on the inner surface of the third eyelid. This gland produces 30 – 60% of the tears in the dog and cat; the main orbital lacrimal gland located beneath a portion of the skull bone above the eye, is responsible for the remaining tear production. The amount of tear produced by these glands varies.

The third eyelid gland is normally hidden behind the third eyelid, and kept in position by a small ligament. A prolapsed gland (cherry eye) is thought to be a weakness or laxity of this ligament. The risk this gland will not function adequately after surgery increases the longer it remains in an abnormal position. Certain breeds are predisposed to this condition, such as the Cocker Spaniel, Bulldog, Beagle, Lhasa Apso, Shih Tzu and Bloodhound, although it can occur in other breeds.



How is cherry eye repaired?

The preferred method of treating cherry eye is to surgically tack the gland back in place, which allows it to retain function. This method reduces the risk of your dog developing 'dry eye' (KCS or keratoconjunctivitis sicca) later in life. Dry eye is a serious condition which can prove difficult to treat; it necessitates medication for life, which can become quite costly.

When performed by an experienced veterinary ophthalmologist, this method of surgical repair has a success rate of approximately 90%. Therefore, there is a 10% chance the gland will prolapse again, and require further surgery.

Please note: dry eye may develop later in life if there has been damage to all of the lacrimal glands. This damage is usually associated with an immune mediated process, and can be neither predicted, nor prevented.

What happens the day of surgery?

Your dog will be given both pain control and sedation before surgery, which will help to keep him both calm and comfortable. As your pet is prepared for surgery, a breathing (endotracheal) tube will be placed in his windpipe for the administration of inhalant anesthesia. His leg will be shaved, and an IV catheter placed, for administering IV fluids, which help protect his vital organs during surgery. His heart rhythm, blood pressure, blood oxygen and carbon dioxide levels will be closely monitored by our anesthesiologist and Registered Veterinary Technicians throughout the procedure. Generally, we anticipate the surgery will take approximately 20 – 30 minutes.

How will my pet look after surgery?

After surgery, the third eyelid may appear red and swollen for several days – this is normal. To provide support, the third eyelid will be temporarily sutured to the side of the eye, causing the third



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- 150 Norseman Street, Toronto Ontario, M8Z 2R4 • Tel: (416) 232-0211 • Fax: (416) 232-0080 •
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eyelid to stay up, partially covering the eye. This is only temporary; the third eyelid will return to normal position over time.

Do not be alarmed if you notice some blood or blood tinged discharge from the eye for the first few days following surgery. This can be gently wiped away with a moist tissue or face cloth.

What will I need to do at home?

The success of your dog's surgery depends upon a variety of factors, including your commitment to his aftercare. If you have any questions or concerns regarding what to expect in the weeks following surgery, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are always happy to answer your questions, and help ease any concerns you may have.

Once your dog is home, you will need to:

- Keep an Elizabethan Collar (cone) on him at all times, even at night
- Keep him quiet, and refrain from vigorous exercise
- Carefully wipe away any discharge from the eye with a clean, moist tissue or face cloth
- Administer his medication as prescribed, ensuring it is given at the appropriate time (4 times daily, is the same as every 6 hours)
- If administering several different eye drops, wait 5 minutes between each drop, to ensure the medication is not flushed from the eye before it has the opportunity to absorb
- If giving both drops and ointment, always administer the drops first, ointment last. Ointments leave a residue on the eye, which will prevent drops administered immediately after from being absorbed
- Monitor your pet's eye for any changes, and contact us immediately should you become concerned

Please remember to book a follow-up appointment, as requested by the ophthalmologist. It is important for us to monitor the healing process!