Eyelash Disorders

There are three different common eyelash disorders. They are: trichiasis, distichia and ectopic cilia.

**Trichiasis** is hair that, although growing from a normal site, is coming in contact with the cornea (the clear portion at the front of the eye) or conjunctiva (the pink tissue around the eye). Symptoms include excessive squinting/blinking, watery discharge and possible pigmentation on the surface of the cornea.

**Distichia** are small hairs (cilia) that are growing on the inner surface of the eyelid margin from (or near) the glands on the lids known as the ‘meibomian glands’. These cilia may or may not have contact with the cornea.

Most dogs with distichia do not display any signs of discomfort. However, if the hairs are stiff and rub against the cornea, the dog will exhibit symptoms such as excessive blinking/squinting, watery discharge and possible pigmentation or ulceration of the cornea.

**Ectopic Cilia** are single or multiple hairs that grow on the inside of the eyelid, several millimeters from the lid margin (most commonly near the middle of the upper lid). Symptoms include pain, watery discharge and severe squinting and blinking. Ectopic cilia often cause ulcers on the cornea which are resistant to healing until the cilia is removed. Ectopic cilia are very painful.

What is the cause of these conditions?

Eyelash disorders are related to breed disposition or facial conformation; they are common in dogs, but rarely seen in cats. They are most often found in young dogs. Although any breed can be affected, the following breeds carry a predisposition:

- Breeds with pronounced facial folds such as the Pekingese, Bulldog and Pug can have trichiasis
- Both Cocker Spaniels and Weimeraners often have distichia
- Ectopic cilia are common in the Shih Tzu, Dachshund, Lhasa Apso and the Shetland Sheepdog to name a few

What is the treatment for these conditions?

**Trichiasis** can occasionally be managed conservatively by keeping facial hair clipped. However, this may cause the offending hairs to become more coarse, and thus more irritating. Various surgical procedures can be performed, depending on each situation:

- Facial fold removal
- Removal of the hairs by laser
• Removal of the skin from which the hair is growing
• Injections of collagen to roll the offending area away from the eye. This is a temporary treatment, with efficacy of 6-8 months.

Distichia is only treated if it is causing irritation to the eye. Should treatment be deemed necessary, each hair follicle is individually destroyed with a laser, and the hair is removed.

However, it is important to note that in the future additional treatments may be required. Some follicles may have been dormant and not actively growing hair at the time of the initial treatment.

Ectopic Cilia are treated by surgically removing the hair and follicle, followed by destroying any remnants of the follicle with a laser.

Although the cilia will not re-grow from the treated sites, there is a risk of other dormant follicles growing cilia at other sites in either eye in the future.

What will I need to do at home?
• Give all medication as directed.
• If prescribed both drops and ointment, be sure to apply the drops before applying the ointment. Ointments create a greasy barrier, which the drops cannot permeate.
• Dependent upon which procedure has been performed, your pet may need to wear an Elizabethan Collar (e-collar, or cone) to prevent him from rubbing the eye. If so, this collar is to be worn at all times (even at night) until the eye has fully healed.
• Clean any discharge from the eye with a moist tissue or soft cloth
• Please arrange a follow-up appointment as requested by the ophthalmologist, so we can continue to monitor your pet’s progress

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us; we are always happy to answer any questions you may have!