



Ectopic cilia

What are ectopic cilia?

An ectopic cilium (singular) is an individual hair which is growing on the inside of the eyelid. It emerges through the conjunctiva and then rubs inappropriately on the cornea. They are most common near the middle part of the upper eyelid, but can occur anywhere around the conjunctiva lining the eyelids.

What are the signs of ectopic cilia?

The eye will be painful and there will be a watery discharge. The eyelids may spasm. The ectopic cilium may abrade the surface of the cornea, causing a small round hole called a corneal ulcer. This can attract our attention as to their presence. This corneal ulcer is unlikely to heal unless the hair is removed.



How are ectopic cilia diagnosed?

Ectopic cilia may very occasionally be seen with the naked eye with very close inspection. Usually, they are detected when a veterinary ophthalmologist uses equipment called a slit-lamp biomicroscope, which provides a very magnified view. Occasionally they are only found under general anaesthetic, when a more thorough search can be undertaken.

What is the treatment for ectopic cilia?

- Plucking isn't possible because of the location of the hair on the inner surface of the eyelid.
- Surgical excision of the ectopic cilia is often required, to remove the root and prevent regrowth. Magnification such as operating microscope is required to perform this task.

Prognosis

Surgical treatment is usually curative. Most dogs recover fully and experience significant relief from the symptoms of the condition. Occasionally new hairs emerge that require surgical removal, so repeat examination is required if similar symptoms occur in the future.

