

Entropion

Entropion is inturning or inversion of the eyelid. It is frequently only the lower lid that is involved although both lids can be affected in Shar Peis and Chow Chows. It is common in many dogs and is inherited in some breeds.



Cocker spaniels, Labrador retrievers, golden retrievers. Shar Peis and Chow Chows are commonly affected together with other popular breeds. In some, such as the St Bernard and bloodhound, the looseness of the skin on the head probably plays a part.

A small or deepset eye can also predispose to the development of inward rolling eyelids as the eye does not provide support for the growing eyelids.

In cats entropion can be seen in Persian and Exotic breeds affecting the inner lower eyelid, or sometimes the lower lid similar to the photograph of the Rottweiler shown here, although this tends to occur only in middle age and older cats – the cat above was 12 years old.

Causes of entropion

Primary entropion can be due to either an excess of eyelid tissue or a small eye, or both. This results in a variable amount of the hair covered eyelid turning inwards with the hairs rubbing directly on the front of the eye (cornea). This is extremely painful and not surprisingly the dog tries to alleviate this by pawing or rubbing at the eye, making the problem worse. Without treatment the cornea (clear part of the eye) can be so seriously damaged that ulceration and even blindness can result. The condition tends to be less painful in cats than dogs.

Secondary entropion also occurs, where the problem does not lie with the pet's underlying anatomy but something else has caused pain and triggered squinting which then leads to the eyelid rolling in. Things such as a retained foreign body (e.g. grass seed under the third eyelid), a primary viral ulcer in a cat (due to Herpes – part of the cat 'flu syndrome), ingrowing hairs poking through the eyelid and rubbing on the cornea to cause pain and ulceration or an underlying dry eye (keratoconjunctivitis sicca).



Signs of entropion

Initially the dog or cat might show intermittent squinting and look as if the eye is partly closed. Some rubbing might occur. The affected eye will probably have some discharge – usually watery with tears spilling down the face. Seriously affected dogs, e.g. young Shar Pei pups, might even have very poor vision, simply because they cannot open their eyes properly.

Treatment options

Treatment depends upon the breed and severity. Very occasionally the condition is self correcting as the puppy grows. However the majority of affected dogs and many cats need specialised surgery. The position of the eyelid has to be corrected surgically so that hairs do not impinge upon the delicate surface of the eye. In experienced hands surgery is usually very successful.

