

ECTOPIC CILIA

What is an ectopic cilia?

An ectopic cilia is an abnormal hair that erupts from the inside of the eyelid and directly contacts the cornea. Unlike distichia (see Distichiasis Factsheet), which emerge from the edge of the eyelid, ectopic cilia emerge under the eyelid and can be difficult to detect.

Are particular animals at risk?

This is a disease primarily seen in young dogs. We have seen ectopic cilia in many breeds and cross-bred dogs. In the UK Breeds more likely to be affected include: Bulldog, Flatcoated Retriever, Pekingese, English Cocker Spaniel, Rough Collie, Shetland Sheepdog and Yorkshire Terrier.

What are the signs of ectopic cilia?

This is always a painful condition as the position of the abnormal hair can cause development of deep corneal ulceration (see Deep Corneal Ulceration Factsheet). Increased blink rate, excessive tear production, red swollen conjunctiva and a blue discolouration to the surface of the eye are all common signs.

Can both eyes be affected?

Yes, although it is much more common to find only one eye affected.

What are the treatment options for ectopic cilia?

The abnormal hair and hair root must be removed surgically under general anaesthesia. These cases are treated urgently as continued corneal abrasion may lead to significant secondary complications including the necessity for surgical corneal repair (see Deep Corneal Ulceration Factsheet).

Can the ectopic cilia grow back?

The surgical removal of the hair root removes the possibility of repeat hair growth and further surgery is unlikely to be required.

