

Ectropion

BASIC INFORMATION

Description

Ectropion is outward rolling of the eyelid and usually involves the central part of the lower eyelid. It may also affect the upper lid. It occurs predominantly in the dog.

Causes

Ectropion may be inherited and may develop early in the American cocker spaniel, basset hound, bloodhound, Clumber spaniel, Great Dane, Newfoundland, mastiff, Saint Bernard, boxer, and other breeds.

The Saint Bernard often has ectropion of the central eyelids, entropion of the outer portion of the eyelids, and excessive lid length, giving the opening of their eyes a “pagoda” or “diamond” shape. Individuals in other breeds may have a similar eyelid conformation.

Acquired ectropion may occur after eyelid trauma (especially lacerations or bite wounds) or eyelid surgery (such as overzealous entropion repair or removal of large lid tumors). Acquired ectropion may also develop in older dogs from decreased muscle tone of the eyelids and may be noted temporarily in hunting dogs when they become tired. Ectropion may also occur with paralysis of the seventh cranial nerve, which activates the eyelid muscles.

Clinical Signs

Many dogs have no clinical signs except for increased visibility of the conjunctiva of the lower eyelid. If the eyelid does not protect the nearby cornea or if ectropion is combined with entropion, then signs of corneal inflammation or ulceration (squinting, discharge, redness) may occur. Debris sometimes collects in the gap between the affected portion of the eyelid and the cornea and may be irritating to the eye.

Diagnostic Tests

Diagnosis is usually made by close examination of the eyelids. The eyelids may also be assessed for entropion, before and after local anesthetic drops are applied. The cornea is often stained with fluorescein to determine whether an ulcer is present.

TREATMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

Treatment Options

Dogs with minimal clinical signs may be treated conservatively by flushing debris from the eye with eye-irrigating solutions and applying a protective ophthalmic lubricant (usually an ointment).



Surgical treatment is usually reserved for those cases with corneal irritation or inflammation, persistent conjunctivitis, or concurrent entropion. A variety of surgical procedures have been developed to correct ectropion, including simple wedge resection of the affected area. More complicated procedures are indicated if entropion and/or excessive lid length are also present.

Follow-up Care

For dogs treated conservatively with medical therapy, periodic rechecks may be indicated to monitor for ocular inflammation. Following surgery, it is common for an Elizabethan collar to be used. Topical antibiotics may also be applied to the eye. Sutures are usually removed in 10-14 days.

Prognosis

Simple ectropion may cause very few problems throughout the lifetime of the dog. Most forms of symptomatic ectropion are helped considerably by surgery.