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Distichiasis and Trichiasis

What are these diseases? Distichia are misplaced eyelashes that originate from inside the eyelid margin and are directed towards the eye. Trichiasis is similar but involves hair from normally placed follicles that have grown towards the eye.

Why are these hairs or eyelashes a problem? These misdirected hairs can cause mechanical irritation to the eye resulting in excessive tearing, squinting and inflammation. After time these hairs can result in corneal ulcers and other problems if left untreated.

What should be done? If simply plucked, these hairs will grow back and cause more irritation. A permanent surgical solution is recommended. The procedure will require that your pet is under general anesthesia and positioned under an operating microscope to visualize the misplaced hairs. There are several ways to treat these hairs including freezing (cryosurgery), burning (electroepilation) and surgical excision (cutting the follicles out). It depends on the origin and number of hairs or eyelashes involved which dictates the appropriate treatment.

What should I expect after surgery? Expect your pet to still be uncomfortable for the first few days after surgery. Some of the techniques can cause substantial swelling and possible depigmentation of the eyelid structures. Most pets require some topical treatment for a short period of time after surgery and a recheck visit is recommended two to three weeks after the procedure.

Will this problem recur? While the success rate is very high it is possible to have some growth of hairs from the same or new follicles. It is also possible after removal of the hairs that some of your pets symptoms will continue due to some other problem like seasonal allergies. The procedure is 90% to 95% percent successful at making your pet comfortable long-term.