

Cherry Eye (prolapsed nictitans gland)

- Cherry eye is a condition in which the tear-producing gland of the eye appears as a red, round mass on the inside corner of the pet's eye.
- The condition usually occurs in young dogs and, rarely, in cats.
- Surgical correction is usually required to secure the gland in place behind the third eyelid.

What Is Cherry Eye?

Like people, animals have upper and lower eyelids. However, they also have a third eyelid on the inside corner of each eye for extra protection of the eye's surface. Tucked beneath this third eyelid is the nictitans gland, a small, pinkish mass of tissue that helps produce tears to lubricate the eye.

Occasionally, this gland can stick out from behind the third eyelid and become inflamed and swollen. This condition is called a *prolapsed nictitans gland*, or, more commonly, *cherry eye*, most likely because the gland appears as a red, round mass on the inside corner of the pet's eye. Cherry eye may occur in only one eye or in both eyes.

What Causes Cherry Eye?

Normally, the nictitans gland is anchored into place. Weak attachments may cause it to become loose and protrude outside the third eyelid. Cherry eye usually

occurs in young dogs under the age of 2 years and in breeds such as Boston terriers, cocker spaniels, beagles, and bulldogs. It is not common in cats.

What Are the Signs of Cherry Eye?

If your pet has cherry eye, you will notice a round, red swelling on the inside corner of the pet's eye. The eye itself may appear to be red and inflamed, and your pet may produce more tears and blink more often.

How Is Cherry Eye Treated?

Surgical correction is generally required to secure the gland back in place. This surgery is preferred over removal of the gland, because the gland is an important source of tears to lubricate the eye. Removal of the gland may result in another condition, called *dry eye*, in which the eye does not produce enough tears.

After surgery, your pet may require topical medications to reduce swelling of the gland and an Elizabethan collar to prevent pawing at the eye.

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