



Third Eyelid Gland Prolapse ('Cherry Eye') Fact Sheet

The third eyelid is the membrane that sweeps over the surface of the eye and functions to spread tears across and protect the eye. It is usually only possible to see the edge of the third eyelid which is located in the lower corner of the eye near the nose.

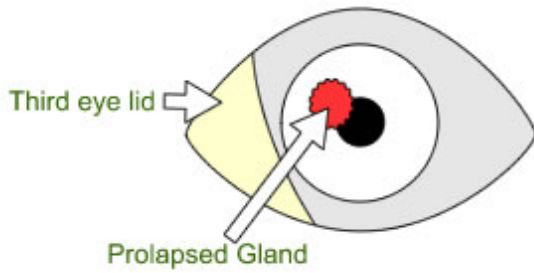
There is a tear gland located behind and deep to the third eyelid that is not usually visible. Occasionally, however, the gland moves from its deep location and protrudes over its free edge. This prolapsed third eyelid gland appears as a pink swollen mass in the corner of the eye and because of this is commonly referred to as 'cherry eye'. The gland has a very important function in producing tears which are essential to keep the surface of the eye moist and healthy.

Although cherry eye is not usually painful, it is often associated with conjunctivitis and the prolapsed gland may become inflamed and lead to lowered tear production ('dry eye').

Prolapsed Gland

The recommended treatment is to surgically return the gland to its normal position. There are a number of ways this can be done. The simplest technique involves burying the gland in a pocket of conjunctiva behind the third eyelid and then suturing the pocket closed. This method is usually very effective and allows the third eyelid to continue to move normally. However, the gland can re-prolapse in some cases and so repeated surgery may be required.

If third eyelid gland prolapse recurs more than twice then we may recommend a different type of third eyelid gland surgery (this is not usually done as a 'first-line' option as it is a more complicated surgery).



What happens after the operation?

Following surgery, the third eyelid may be slightly red and swollen and there might be a discharge from the eye. We dispense a short course of antibiotic eye drops and pain relief tablets if considered necessary.

A recheck appointment is usually performed 10-14 days after surgery, either here or at your own vets. If prolapse of the gland recurs then a further operation may be needed; please get in touch with us if any concerns.

Davies Veterinary Specialists, Manor Farm Business Park, Higham Gobion, Herts SG5 3HR 01582 853878

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