

Lagophthalmos



Are your pet's eyes partially open while sleeping? It may be the result of lagophthalmos. A potentially harmful, but easily treatable condition.

What is lagophthalmos?

Lagophthalmos is the inability to completely close the eyelids. This condition is most common in breeds of dogs with prominent or protruding eyes – such as the Boston Terrier, Lhasa Apso, Pug, Pekingese and Shih-Tzu. Many breeds of cat, including Persian, Burmese, Exotic Shorthair and Himalayan, can also be affected by the condition.

If your pet suffers from lagophthalmos, you will often notice a slight opening between the eyelids when he or she is sleeping.

How to detect if your pet has lagophthalmos?

The easiest way to diagnose this condition is to observe your pet while he or she sleeps. If you detect any separation between the upper and lower eyelids, make an appointment to see your veterinarian as soon as possible. A full eye examination can reveal if any corneal scarring or ulcers have occurred.

Why is it harmful to your pet?

The eyelids perform a number of important functions. Most notably, they protect the eye from trauma and prevent the evaporation of tears. When your pet is unable to completely close the eyelids, tears evaporate more quickly, leaving the cornea exposed and unprotected.

This can lead to frequent abrasions on the cornea and, ultimately, a corneal ulcer – which is a hole in the outermost surface of the eye. Corneal ulcers are very painful and cause severe redness of the eye. When suffering from this condition, the pet will try keeping the eye closed whenever possible.

As the condition persists, the ulcer can result in corneal scarring and pigmentation (a brown or black color to the surface of the eye). If severe enough, the scarring and pigmentation could eventually cause blindness.

How is the condition treated?

The most effective treatment is surgery. With procedures called lateral or medial canthoplasty, a small portion of the eyelid is removed so that it takes on more of an almond shape. This improves the ability of the eyelid to close completely, especially during sleep. This type of surgery has been highly effective in treating lagophthalmos before chronic corneal irritation develops.



before canthoplasty



after canthoplasty

Artificial tears and lubricating ointments may be applied before bedtime to help protect the cornea until surgery can be performed. Generally, post-surgical care is minimal. The incision can be easily protected, and an Elizabethan collar is often used to keep the pet from damaging the surgery site. The sutures are absorbable, and usually do not need to be removed.

Veterinarians at Banfield Pet Hospital® have the equipment and expertise to perform lateral or medial canthoplasty and prevent the effects of lagophthalmos.

Talk to a veterinarian today.

If you have any questions about lagophthalmos, or are concerned that your pet may suffer from this condition, please talk to your veterinarian.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

