

## Distichiasis (Ingrown Eyelashes)



**Distichiasis**, or ingrown eyelashes, occurs when the eyelashes grow abnormally, at an angle that puts the lashes in direct contact with the cornea. The hairs themselves are abnormal – long, stiff, and growing out of the oil glands within the lids. Usually, there are more than one hair, and both eyes, involved. Most dogs don't have lower eyelashes, but in distichiasis, even lower lids can have hairs growing out of the oil glands into the corneas.

~ [Ingrown Eyelashes Cause Irritation, Pain, Possible Vision Loss](#)

2009

### The symptoms:

If the hairs are very fine, there may be no symptoms. But if the hairs curl, or grow at an angle and are not fine, then they may very well irritate the cornea. In those cases, the symptoms may include:

- Squinting
- Gummy discharge from the eyes
- Corneal ulcers, which appear as bluish/gray discolorations on the eye's surface.
- When severe, the ulcer's indentation of the cornea may be visible to the naked eye and
- The basset may injure himself, pawing at his eyes

### Diagnosis:

If the hairs are visible, diagnosis is quite obvious and easy. However, often the hairs are very small, and if s/he suspects distichiasis, s/he'll use special equipment to make the diagnosis.

### Treatments:

- In severe cases, surgery to remove the eyes' hair follicles and oil glands. The results are permanent, and the hairs do not grow back
- Electroepilation is also used: a fine, electrified needle is passed into the hair follicle, destroying the root. The hair can grow back, and often does if there were undeveloped hair cells at the time of the procedure, which then develop afterward.
- Cryopilation is similar to electroepilation, but instead of electricity, a very thin metal probe is passed into the follicle, and the root is frozen with liquid nitrogen. Again, the hair can grow back, for the same reason as in electroepilation.

~ [Distichiasis: Eyelashes Gone Awry](#)

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**Prevention**

The best prevention is to select your dog from a breeder whose stock is certified distichiasis-free for at least two generations. But, considering this book is mostly about *rescue* bassets, that will almost certainly not be possible. So, the second best option is to keep a very sharp lookout for any signs of eye discomfort or distress, before distichiasis becomes a serious problem. There are also some “head ‘em off” surgical options -- but those should be discussed with your veterinarian.