

Eye conditions in Cavalier King Charles Spaniels

Information for breeders and pet owners

Melbourne EyeVet

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Conjunctivitis

Cavalier KCS can often develop red eyes, which is more common when they are young. Conjunctivitis is inflammation of the eyelid and eyeball lining and is usually due to allergies. Anything that can cause allergies, i.e. hayfever can cause conjunctivitis including dust, grass, plants, pollen and smoke. Treatment includes bathing the eyes with, for example Calendula Tea, and drops or ointments such as topical anti-histamines or cortisone.

Dry Eye

Dry eye is a condition in which there is sub-optimal tear production. There are 3 categories of dry eye in CKCS: congenital dry eye, curly coat and dry eye syndrome (genetic), and conventional dry eye developing in adult dogs.

Congenital dry eye can be difficult to treat, and treatment is aimed at trying to improve tear production and keeping the eye comfortable. Surgery may be required, even eye removal in some cases.

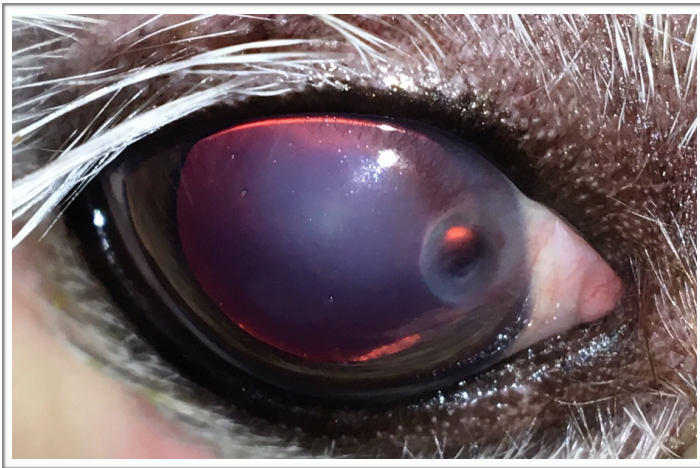
Curly coat dry eye syndrome is a severe congenital condition seen in the breed affecting the skin, coat, claws and eyes of affected puppies. There is a genetic test for this condition and good breeders know the status of their breeding dogs.

The most common dry eye is due to immune-mediated disease/inflammation. This can also develop due to chronic conjunctivitis or previous cherry eye (third eyelid gland prolapse that is replaced with surgery). Treatment with immuno-suppressive drugs like cyclosporin (ointment or drops) and tacrolimus are used to improve the tear readings and return the eyes to optimal health. Lifelong treatment is required. If not treated, dry eye can result in serious corneal ulcers, scarring and vision loss.



Extra eyelashes/distichiasis

Distichia are abnormal extra eyelashes that grow from the glands on the eyelid edge. In most CKCS they are fine and float in the tear film and don't cause problems. However in some dogs, the distichia are thicker and can cause irritation and corneal ulcers. Surgery is necessary in such cases to either cut them out by the root or freeze the root to destroy it. This surgery is a specialist procedure. If your Cavalier is diagnosed with this, let the breeder know as they are passed on from the parents. In Australia in 2017, the incidence of distichiasis was 4%.



Corneal ulceration

Due to the prominence of the eyes in this breed, trauma resulting in a corneal ulcer is not uncommon. This breed often has low tear production, a slower blink reflex, and can have a reduced ability to spread the tears over the globe due to some having oversized eyelids. All of these factors lead to an increased chance of trauma/corneal ulceration.

An ulcer is a scratch of the clear

surface of the eye - the cornea. A simple ulcer should heal within 5-7 days with simple treatment (ointment and anti-inflammatories). More serious ulcers, including deeper ulcers or those that are infected, require more involved treatment and referral to an eye specialist is recommended. If an ulcer doesn't heal within 1-2 weeks or appears to be getting worse, consider a referral to an eye specialist.

Corneal injury

It is worth noting that all new puppy owners should be aware of potential corneal injury when a puppy is introduced into a house already occupied by a cat. For some reason, this breed is over-represented in such injuries, but any new puppy is at risk. It is a common history that the friendly puppy raced up to the cat who lashed out and caused a corneal laceration. These injuries can be severe and if not properly checked may result in loss of the eye within 4-6 weeks (due to rupture of the lens inside the eye). Careful, controlled introductions and fully supervised interactions should be carried out until it is clear that the cat is no longer threatened by the dog (this may take months).

Corneal lipid dystrophy

Cavalier KCS are amongst the many breeds that develop corneal lipid dystrophy. This is usually a bilateral, symmetrical, noninflammatory corneal syndrome that is often familial. Centrally located circular or oval crystalline deposits are present just under the surface of the cornea. These white to grey spots typically appear between 2 and 5 years of age. Medical treatment is not usually effective and these lesions rarely cause significant visual impairment. Incidence in the US is 8-10% of dogs examined for CERF. In Australia the incidence was 2% in 2017.





Cataract

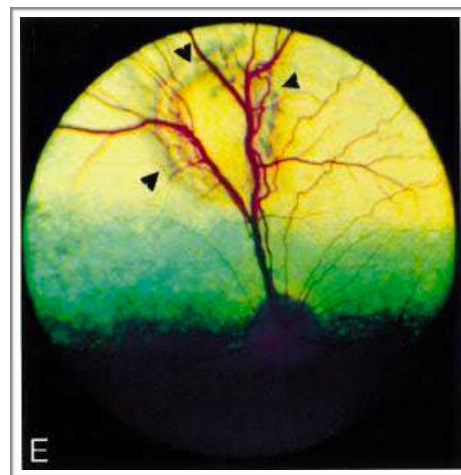
A cataract is an opacity of the lens inside the eye. Both congenital and adult onset cataracts have been described in this breed, including star cataracts (small focal opacities at the centre, back of the lens). In the CKCS, onset is usually at an early age (less than 6 months), with rapid progression to complete cataract resulting in blindness. Fortunately due to diligence of the many good breeders, the incidence is now very low. Breeding dogs should be screened (annually for

males and prior to breeding for females). Incidence in the US is approximately 4%. In Australia in 2017, 1% had hereditary cataract.

MRD - Multifocal Retinal Dysplasia

Retinal dysplasia is another inherited condition seen in this breed. Linear, triangular, curved or curvilinear areas of retinal folding is seen. If these have not disappeared by 12 months of age, a diagnosis of MRD is made (see middle photo). It is a congenital, non-progressive condition with varying degrees of severity. MRD does not affect vision (unless perhaps in extremely severe cases). Affected dogs should not be bred as more severe forms may be seen,

although the genetic relationship between folds and more severe forms is undetermined. A second form of retinal dysplasia is geographic retinal dysplasia when a giant retinal fold, often circular or U-shaped, is seen. This area of retina is abnormal and can result in



focal retinal detachment, and even predispose the affected dog to total retinal detachment and vision loss. A third form, total retinal dysplasia is extremely rare in this breed.

Affected eyes are blind. The incidence of MRD in the US has dropped from around 10% in the 1990's to less than 5% in 2014. Geographic retinal dysplasia has reduced from 4.3% to 1.8% incidence over the same time. Total retinal detachment has reduced from 7 in 1000 to 1 in 1000 CKCS examined for CERF in US. In Australia in 2017, 1% of CKCS had MRD and 2% geographic RD.



ACES - Australian Canine Eye Scheme

Eye Certification via ACES is recommended to assess dogs for breeding. This is a full eye examination that will pick up many inherited eye conditions including distichiasis, retinal dysplasia, microphthalmos (small eye), cataract and other lens deformities seen in recent years such as lenticonus. Only registered veterinary eye specialists who have been listed as ACES Panelists can perform this test. Breeders will be presented a certificate with the full results of the test. Melbourne EyeVet works closely with breeders to ensure that the puppies they breed have optimal eye health.

Prospective owners should expect to be provided with copies of all the testing of the parents including copies of eye certificates, heart certificates and DNA test results. A link to the annual reports by breed can be found at <https://www.ava.com.au/aces>

