Understanding the Risks and Complications of Canine Eyelid Surgery

Eyelid surgery is a common procedure in veterinary ophthalmology. It corrects conditions such as entropion (inward rolling of the eyelid), ectropion (outward rolling of the eyelid), eyelid tumors, and eyelid lacerations. While generally safe, it carries potential risks and complications, as with any surgery.

Potential complications

- **Infection.** As with any surgery, there is a risk of infection. Your veterinarian may prescribe antibiotics to help prevent this.
- **Bleeding or hematoma.** Blood may collect under the skin after surgery. This is usually managed by the veterinary team.
- **Scarring.** Scars may form at the surgical site and could potentially interfere with eyelid function.
- **Dehiscence (wound breakdown).** In some cases the surgical wound may reopen, requiring additional treatment or surgery.
- **Changes in eyelid position.** Overcorrection or undercorrection may occur, leaving the eyelid rolling inward or outward. This may require additional surgery to correct.
- **Dry eye (keratoconjunctivitis sicca).** Tear production may be reduced after surgery, causing a dry eye condition that requires treatment.
- **Corneal ulcers or abrasions.** These can occur if your dog rubs at the surgical site, or because of changes in eyelid position after surgery.

Prognosis after eyelid surgery

The prognosis following eyelid surgery is generally very favorable, and most cases result in a permanent resolution of the problem. Surgery for malignant tumors can be less predictable because of a higher risk of recurrence, even after successful excision.

Uncontrolled skin or ocular allergies can contribute to the recurrence or development of entropion even after a successful eyelid procedure. Effective allergy control is therefore important for the outcome of many eyelid surgeries and for a smooth recovery.

Each case is unique, and outcomes can vary.

Preventing complications

The key to minimizing complications is following all post-operative care instructions. These often include giving prescribed medications, preventing your dog from rubbing the eye or being overly active in the first days and weeks after surgery, and attending all follow-up appointments.

Before surgery, please discuss any concerns about possible complications with our team. We will explain what to expect and how risks can be minimized.

Contact us promptly if you notice worsening pain, heavy discharge, wound separation, or sudden cloudiness of the eye.

All surgical procedures carry some risk. It is important to weigh these risks against the potential benefits of surgery and make an informed decision for your pet.

Educational information only. It does not replace an individualized examination and treatment plan from your veterinary ophthalmologist.