General Shar-Pei Eye Problems

In the past, eye problems were a major problem in the Chinese Shar-Pei breed. Over the years, breeders have been diligent in their breeding choices, and many of the problems have been eliminated or at least reduced significantly.

Signs of Eye Disease

1. Excessive eye tearing
2. Squinting or keeping the eyes closed.
3. Pawing or rubbing the eyes
4. Redness of the eye or a "bloodshot" eye.
5. Cloudiness of the cornea.

If any of the above symptoms appear in your Chinese Shar-Pei, contact your vet immediately.

Chemosis

This is a normal condition seen in the Chinese Shar-Pei primarily in puppies. Chemosis is edema of the lining of the eye resulting in puffiness of the white conjunctiva around the eyeball. In other breeds this is abnormal and may be seen with allergic reactions and/or inflammation of the eye as occurs in viral and bacterial diseases.

In Shar-Pei puppies this condition may actually protect the eyeball from the damage of entropion because the eyelashes rub on the lining of the eye and not on the cornea itself. Most Shar-Pei puppies outgrow this condition and it should never be treated in the Shar-Pei breed.

Cherry Eye

"Cherry Eye" is properly called Prolapse of the Gland of the Third Eyelid. Dogs have a third eyelid in the corner of the eye nearest the nose. It serves as a "windshield wiper" distributing the tear film over the eye. It also contains a tear producing gland which accounts for about 50% of the tear production in the eye. In your Shar-Pei puppies, this gland will occasionally break loose from its attachment in the third eyelid and "pop" up and appear as a swelling in the corner of the eye. It often will appear red and inflamed, although it doesn't seem to bother the dog too much. This condition must be surgically corrected using a "tacking" procedure which reattaches the gland to its position in the third eyelid. While it is not a difficult surgery there is about a 10-20% reoccurrence rate and the surgery has to be repeated. Some veterinarians advise removal of the gland, but this could result in decreased tear production later on and a condition known as "dry eye" or KCS. Tacking should be tried first. In the Shar-Pei, entropion may be a complicating factor in cherry eye in
that the eyelashes rub on the third eyelid and may cause irritation resulting in prolapse of the gland. The eyelids may be tacked along with the cherry eye correction.

**Entropion**

Entropion is an anatomical condition which causes the eyelids to “roll into” the eye. The lids, eyelashes and surrounding skin and hair rub the cornea (the clear part of the eyeball) causing pain. Eye pain manifests as excessive tearing, squinting (called blepharospasm), and rubbing or pawing at the eye. The condition can progress to corneal ulceration, in which the superficial layer of the cornea is actually rubbed off.

In extreme cases this could result in severe corneal damage and rupture of the eye itself. Two different types of procedures are done in cases of entropion depending on the age of the animal.

1. Eye tacking
2. Entropion Surgery

**Eye Tacking**

Puppies open their eyes at about 7 – 10 days of age. In Shar-Pei, this is often when the first symptoms of entropion appear.

Typically the puppies open their eyes, but quickly they begin squinting and closing them. Many times the breeder doesn’t realize they have opened and the first clue they have of a problem is a puppy who’s eyes are not open by ten days of age. Often there is a mucous eye discharge and these puppies usually don’t eat very well or gain weight like their littermates.

Eye tacking is a temporary measure in which sutures (stitches) are placed in the eye lids to roll the lids “out” of the eyeball. Often this can be done without anesthesia in very young puppies. Sometimes gas anesthesia is used. Nylon sutures are placed in the eyelids, which opens the eyes. Often an antibiotic eye ointment is dispensed to help heal any corneal ulcers and prevent secondary bacterial infections. These sutures are left in place for as long as possible – up to four weeks in some cases. If the sutures loosen up or are causing problems, they can be removed. Eye tacking can result in permanent repair of entropion, but it’s primary goal is to prevent serious eye damage until the pup “grows into his skin” or is old enough to undergo permanent entropion repair. Generally if this permanent surgery is necessary, it is done when the puppy is six to eight months of age.

**Entropion Surgery**

Permanent entropion surgery is often done in Shar-Pei after they reach the age of six to eight months old. This is the age at which most pups are full grown and have “grown into” their heads. Permanent repair is a surgical procedure that will result in correction of the eyelid problem.

It’s success depends on the experience and artistry of the surgeon and often times referral to a veterinary ophthalmologist is recommended.

The procedure involves various techniques to remove excessive eyelid tissue from the lids, tighten up the eye opening and sometimes remove extra folds of skin around the eyes. Typically the dogs look worse for a few days after the surgery due to the swelling that occurs and they often sport an Elizabethan or “lampshade” collar to protect the sutures. Stitches are usually removed in 7 – 14 days.

**Entropion in young puppies can result in corneal ulceration and**

**IT IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY.**

**SEE YOUR VET IMMEDIATELY!**

Information for this brochure was provided by Dr. Jeff Vidt, Chairman, Health Through Education Committee of the Chinese Shar-Pei Club of America.