

EPIPHORA

Tears function to lubricate and protect the surface of the eye. Epiphora means “excessive tearing”, and chronic epiphora may leave brown stains on the face. Epiphora may occur if the cornea is irritated by inflammation, hair, or debris. Another possible cause of excessive tearing is improper drainage of tears through the nasolacrimal duct. Sometimes the cause of epiphora cannot be determined.

To rule out whether your pet’s tearing is caused by an obstructed duct, the doctor may recommend flushing the ducts. If the tearing is not caused by irritation or an obstruction, the epiphora may be breed related. For reasons that are not well understood, many poodles, bichons, and maltese are predisposed to chronic epiphora. One theory is that since these breeds tend to have eyelids that fit tightly against the eyeball, this may make tears spill over onto the face instead of draining down the nasolacrimal duct. Fortunately, this type of epiphora is usually only a cosmetic problem, and not a medical concern.