

Swiss Run Greater Swiss Mountain Dog

Distichiasis

Distichiasis (pronounced Dis-Tic-Kie-A-Sis) is the presence of extra eyelashes on the eyelid. The hairs may emerge either singly or in clumps usually in both eyelids. In most of the affected dogs, the condition may not have clinical significance, with the hair simply floating on the corneal surface. However, with the hairs rubbing on the cornea your pet may develop corneal ulcers.

Most GSMD's have extra eyelashes. Most of the time this condition is *non-symptomatic* and therefore most people will not even know their dog has these lashes. If a breeder tells you their dogs don't have Distichiasis or if they don't even know what it is, stay clear of them. Most GSMD that have been tested by CERF (Canine Eye Registry Foundation) have some degree of Distichiasis and are cleared for breeding because they are not symptomatic. Entropion and Ectropion (turning in or out of the eyelids) is also a problem with some dogs. Be suspicious if a breeder seems to sidestep your questions. Weeping or irritated eyes are very often a sign of symptomatic Distichiasis and/or Entropion.

Distichiasis may be diagnosed with the naked eye, particularly when the hairs are in clumps. There are a couple ways to remove the hairs, none of which are permanent. Cryotherapy is the most common technique used to remove the hair. With this procedure, the hairs go through a double freeze-thaw cycle to destroy the hair follicles. Another procedure is using laser treatment to remove the hairs. If the hairs continue to grow back even with recommended treatments, an entropion procedure should be performed; this entails removing some tissue around the eye lid and rolling it out. This helps keep the eyelashes off the cornea.

With any choice of treatment the eye may need medication to keep it healthy. In the long run this should not be a major issue in your dog's life. Always ask your breeder if the parents had their eyes Certified.