

## Clogged Eye Ducts May Cause Dog's Tear Stream

**An expert answers questions on canine healthcare.**

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Q. My 2-year-old male Airedale has watery eyes. They water year-round in all kinds of weather. I have looked for hair in his eyes and don't see anything. The veterinarian gave us an antibiotic ointment to use twice a day and it didn't seem to help. The tears run down his face and are totally clear. It does not seem to bother him because he never paws at his eyes or rubs them on anything, but it bothers me to think he might be uncomfortable. We have had him about one year and his eyes have always watered. Please help.

A. Your dog most likely has blockage of his tear (nasolacrimal) ducts. The nasolacrimal system drains excess tears from the eyes. Obstruction can lead to abnormal drainage - tears may build up in the eye and run down the face when they overflow.

Blockage can be the result of a birth defect, infection, allergy, trauma, dental problems and tumors. Certain breeds, particularly those with shortened noses, may be predisposed. Abnormal development of the eyelids and lashes also may cause the problem.

With a simple obstruction the tears appear clear and watery; however, the dog's constantly moist skin can cause dark tear staining and secondary dermatitis.

A veterinarian comfortable with common eye diseases should examine your dog. Ask for a referral to a veterinary ophthalmologist. A special dye placed in the eyes can help demonstrate normal or abnormal flow of tears to the nostrils. A small tube can be used to flush the ducts if need be. Sometimes surgery is necessary to reestablish normal tear flow.

Keep the eyes wiped clean and watch for irritation to the eyes and surrounding skin. Good luck!