

TEAR STAINING IN DOGS

WHAT PET OWNERS SHOULD KNOW

Tear staining is a very common issue in dogs. In most cases, it's not a medical concern, but it can be frustrating from a cosmetic standpoint. However, because tear staining can sometimes signal an underlying health issue, it's always a good idea to discuss it with your veterinarian.

WHAT CAUSES TEAR STAINING IN DOGS?

Tear stains are caused by porphyrins, which are iron-containing molecules produced when red blood cells break down. These molecules are found in a dog's tears, saliva, and urine.

When tears sit on the fur around the eyes, porphyrins can leave behind a reddish-brown discoloration, especially noticeable on light-colored coats.

While tear stains are often harmless, several factors can contribute to their development.

COMMON CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- **Breed and eye shape:** Dogs with shallow eye sockets or facial folds (like brachycephalic breeds) may trap moisture and debris more easily
- **Excess tearing:** Often caused by irritation or allergies
- **Blocked tear ducts:** Prevent proper tear drainage
- **Environmental factors:** Dust, pollen, or other irritants

POSSIBLE MEDICAL CAUSES

- Tear duct blockage (leading to epiphora)
- Allergies (food, environmental, etc.)
- Eye infections
- Abnormal eyelash growth (distichiasis)
- Eyelid abnormalities (such as entropion)
- Inflammation
- Dental disease
- Ear infections

DOGS MORE PRONE TO TEAR STAINING



Boston Terriers



Maltese



Shih Tzu



Pekingese



Bulldogs



Boxer



Poodles



Bichon Frise



Cocker Spaniels



Havanese



Lhasa Apso



Pomeranian



Poodle Mix



Light/white fur

HOW TO REMOVE TEAR STAINS IN DOGS

Before starting any treatment, it's important to consult your veterinarian to rule out medical causes. Keep in mind that not every solution works for every dog, so some trial and error may be needed.

1 KEEP THE EYE AREA TRIMMED

Short hair helps prevent moisture buildup. If your dog is wiggly, consider having a professional groomer or your veterinarian assist.

2 USE A TEAR STAIN REMOVER

High-quality products help break down porphyrins and reduce bacteria buildup (Ocryl® Rinse is a cost-effective option). Consistency is key—results won't happen overnight.

3 SWITCH TO FILTERED WATER

Minerals and additives in tap water may contribute to staining in some dogs. Filtered water can sometimes help reduce tearing.

HOW TO PREVENT TEAR STAINS FROM COMING BACK

Once stains are under control, regular maintenance can help keep them from returning:

- Use a tear remover 1–2 times per week (or as directed)
- Keep hair around the eyes neatly trimmed
- Maintain good overall hygiene, especially around the face



Tear staining is usually harmless, but it's always best to rule out underlying issues – especially if the staining appears suddenly or worsens over time. Always consult your veterinarian to determine the best care plan for your pet.