

# “Cherry eye” in dogs

Cherry eye (known clinically as ‘prolapsed nictitating membrane gland’) is an alarming condition affecting the third eyelid of dogs. It results when the gland on the inner aspect of the third eyelid “pops out”, becoming red and swollen (appearing like a cherry) and covering part of the eye.

This study aimed to explore the frequency of cherry eye in UK dogs and to identify which breeds were most affected.

Number of dogs in study

905,553

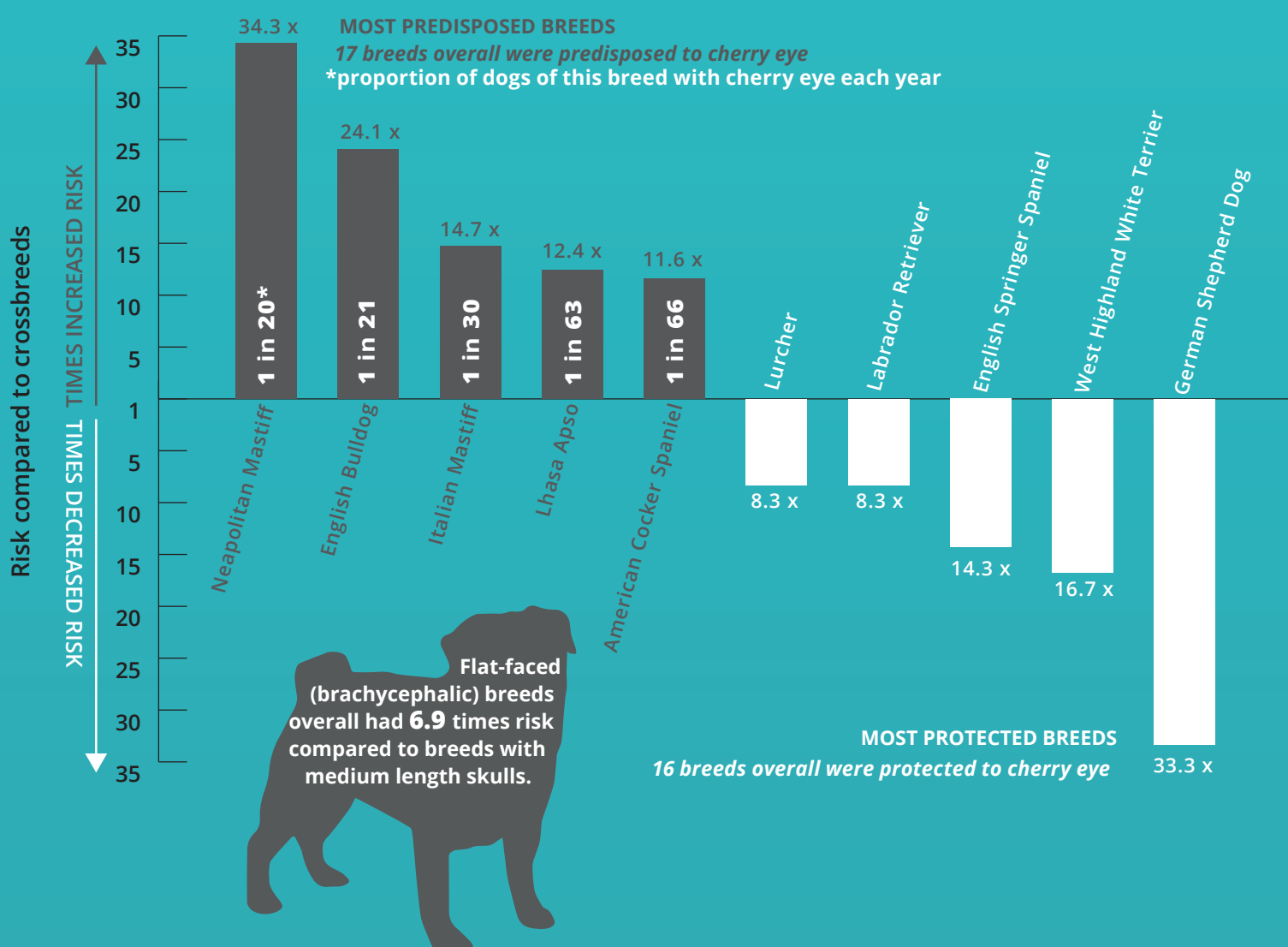
Proportion of dogs with cherry eye each year

1 in 500  
(0.20%)

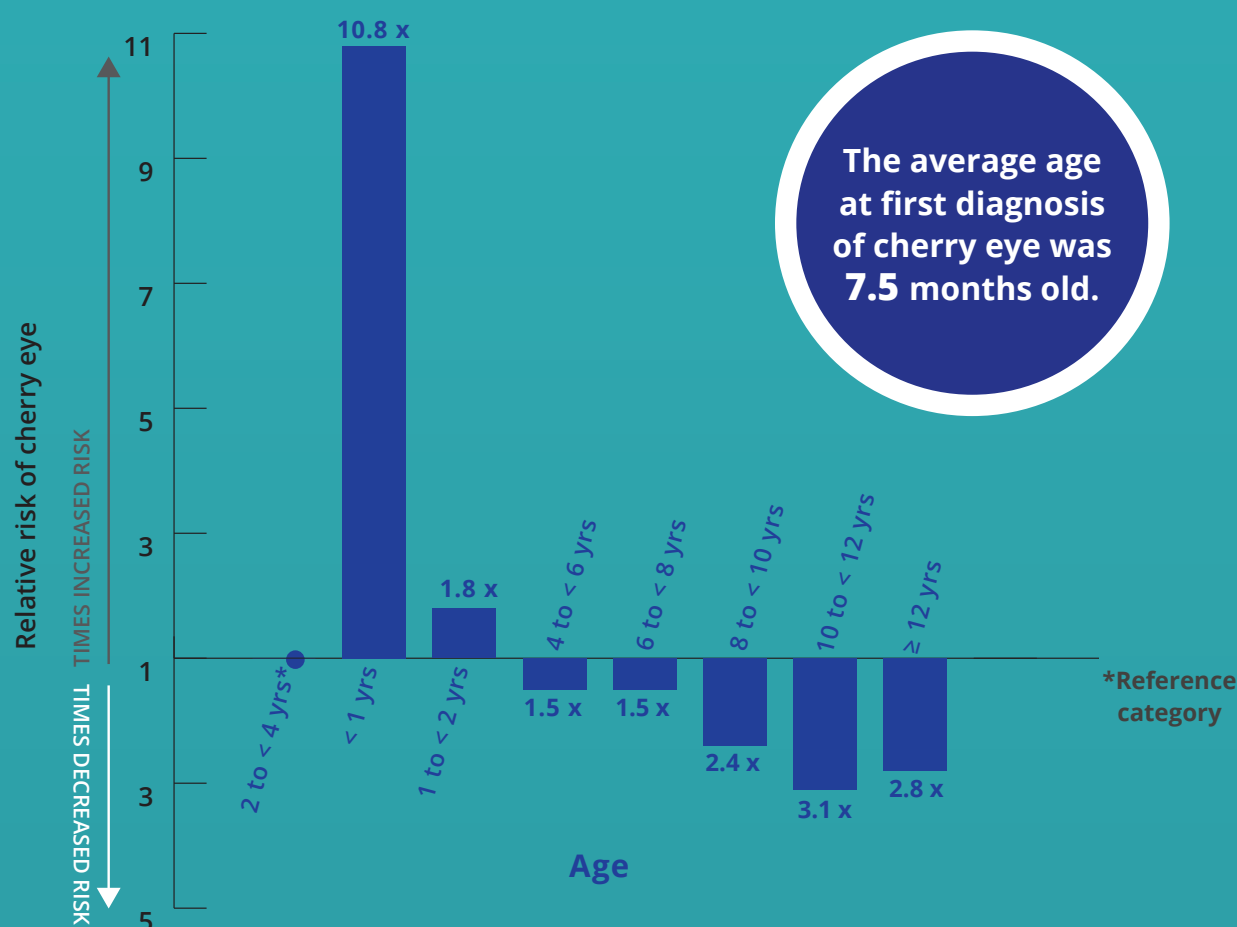
What does cherry eye look like?



## Does the risk of cherry eye vary by breed?



## Other factors predisposing to cherry eye



## CONCLUSIONS:

Cherry eye is not uncommon in dogs. Owners should check their dog’s eyes regularly and seek veterinary advice if concerned.

Young dogs (<2 years) were at greater risk of cherry eye than older dogs. This information could help guide breeding decisions, particularly in high-risk breeds.

The high predisposition to cherry eye of flat faced breeds supports the advice from the UK Brachycephalic Working Group to “Stop and think before buying a flat-faced dog”.

## CLICK TO READ

O'Neill et al. (2021) “Breed and conformational predispositions for prolapsed nictitating membrane gland (PNMG) in dogs in the UK: A VetCompass study” PLOS One

RVC VetCompass <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass> carries out welfare research based on anonymised clinical information shared from over 30% of UK veterinary practices. We are very grateful to the owners and veterinary professionals who contribute to VetCompass research.