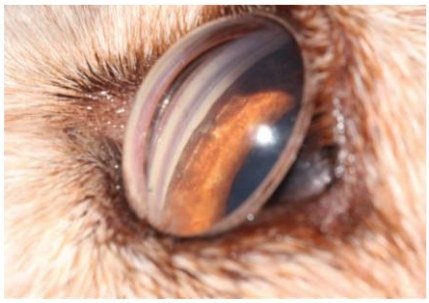


Gonioscopy and the BVA/RKC/ISDS Eye Scheme

Gonioscopy is a technique used to examine the Pectinate Ligament which is present at the entrance of the drainage angle.

Severe abnormality of the pectinate ligament (PLA) has been shown to be a risk factor for the development of an inherited form of glaucoma known as Primary Closed Angle Glaucoma (PCAG). Glaucoma occurs when the pressure inside the eye is too high causing pain and blindness. Inherited glaucoma is a bilateral disease although one eye is usually affected before the other.

Important change from 1 January 2026

From 1 January 2026, gonioscopy results will be recorded using three grades: Grade 1, Grade 2, or Grade 3. Grade 0 will no longer be used.

What the grades mean

Grade 1

- 25% or less of the drainage area is abnormal**.**
- These dogs are considered normal or mildly affected

Grade 2

- Between 26% and 75% of the drainage area is abnormal
- These dogs are considered moderately affected

Grade 3

- More than 75% of the drainage area is abnormal
- These dogs are considered severely affected and at risk of developing glaucoma

Important to understand:

Abnormality of the pectinate ligament has been shown to be inherited and the risk of developing glaucoma increases with the severity of the grade.

Grade 3 is associated with a higher risk however, not all dogs will go on to develop the condition.

For breeding advice specific to your breed, please contact email: health@royalkennelclub.com

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1) **What were the previous PLA (gonioscopy) gradings?**
The PLA grading system used by the BVA/RKC/ISDS Eye Scheme was introduced in January 2018 and consisted of four grades, which were defined as:

- Grade 0: Normal iridocorneal angle (ICA) with no/minimal (0%-<1%) pectinate ligament abnormality (PLA)
- Grade 1: 1-25% of ICA affected by PLA
- Grade 2: 26-75% of ICA affected by PLA
- Grade 3: >75% of ICA affected by PLA, and/or severe narrowing of ICA

2) **What are the new PLA (gonioscopy) gradings?**
From 1 January 2026, the PLA grading system was revised from four grades to three grades, which are defined as:

- Grade 1: 25% or less of the total circumference of the Pectinate Ligament is abnormal. These dogs may be classed as normal/mildly affected.
- Grade 2: Between 26% and 75% of the total circumference of the Pectinate Ligament is abnormal. These dogs may be classed as moderately affected.
- Grade 3: This is where there is more than 75% of the total circumference of the Pectinate Ligament is abnormal. These dogs may be classed as severely affected.

3) **Why have the PLA (gonioscopy) gradings changed?**
Breed communities raised constructive feedback with the BVA/RKC/ISDS Eye Scheme regarding inconsistencies in PLA grading. A detailed review of the grading statistics showed that most discrepancies occurred between Grades 0 and 1. As there is no significant difference between these two grades in terms of breeding implications or risk of glaucoma, the Eye Panel Working Party, in consultation with the wider BVA/RKC/ISDS Eye Panel, proposed simplifying the system.

The proposal involved combining Grades 0 and 1 into a single Grade 1, while retaining Grades 2 and 3. This adjustment created a clear, three-grade system (Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3) that reduces ambiguity but maintains clinical relevance. Breed representatives reviewed and supported this proposal, ensuring that the change reflects both expert guidance and the practical needs of the breeding community.

4) **Why does my certificate still have a Grade 0 box?**
We are currently in the process of using the remaining stock of certificates produced under the previous system. To avoid waste, these will be used before the new certificates are issued. In the meantime, panellists will clearly cross through the Grade 0 box to indicate that this grade is no longer applicable and will record a result of Grade 1, Grade 2, or Grade 3.

Once the existing stock has been fully used, updated certificates reflecting the revised three-grade PLA system will be issued.

5) **What does the Grade mean for my dog (in terms of its risk for glaucoma)?**
Only dogs with severe Pectinate Ligament Abnormality (PLA) (Grade 3) have been shown to be at risk of developing Primary Closed Angle Glaucoma. However, not all dogs with Grade 3 will develop glaucoma.

Dogs with a Grade 1 or Grade 2 result have not been shown to develop the condition.

6) **What does the grade mean for my dog (in terms of breeding decisions)?**
Glaucoma is a serious condition with complex, long-term treatment that often can't be cured.
Although the exact mode of inheritance is not yet known, Pectinate Ligament Abnormality (PLA) and the associated risk of Primary Closed Angle Glaucoma are known to be heritable traits.

For this reason, it is generally advisable not to breed from dogs with a Grade 3 result. Breeding advice can vary between breeds, but for most breeds, it is recommended to breed only from dogs with a Grade 1 result.

However, it is important to remember that many factors should be considered when assessing a dog's suitability for breeding. For more information and breed-specific guidance, please contact the Royal Kennel Club at health@royalkennelclub.com.

7) **Why does the Royal Kennel Club still publish grade 0 results?**
For dogs examined for PLA before 1 January 2026, the grading remains as originally recorded. Please refer to the relevant grading system for your dog's certificate, as outlined in the sections above.

For all tests performed on or after 1 January 2026, the revised three-grade system is used, and no Grade 0 will be recorded for these results.

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