

Princess Animal Hospital Downtown Animal Hospital

Every Pet. Every Client. Every Family. Every Time.

BREED PREDISPOSITION TO DISEASE IN THE DACHSHUND

We all want quality of life for our pets and one way of assuring this is to be aware of genetic or inherited problems. Certain breeds are at risk for certain diseases. This doesn't mean that all dogs of a certain breed will develop these problems nor does it exclude them from other diseases, however, it does help to tailor your pet's medical needs and preventive health care program.

Many conditions simply require us as pet owners to be aware of the potential. Often simple modifications to diet, exercise and lifestyle can be made to maximize quality of life. Knowing your pets' risk for genetic or inherited diseases and what can be done to prevent or slow the progression of these disorders, can help them live the happiest and healthiest life possible.

Periodontal Disease: Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, with 80% of dogs being affected. The health of your pet's teeth is directly related to the length and quality of your pet's life. Your pet's oral health affects all body systems. When the teeth become covered in plaque and tartar, bacteria take up residence in this plaque and pockets of bacteria begin to form under the gums damaging ligaments that hold the teeth in place. Any pocket formation under the gum line is painful. The bacteria in these pockets enter the blood stream and travel to organs such as the heart, lungs, liver, spleen and kidney causing premature damage to these organs. A healthy mouth will add years of life expectancy for your pet!

Recommendations: Have your dog's teeth professionally examined and cleaned once each year. Home care, including tooth brushing, oral gel or T/D diet can help immensely.

Alopecia: This word means hair loss. Some breeds of dogs, especially those with very short haircoats, are prone to pattern baldness. As with balding men, the hair gradually falls out and is not replaced, because the hair follicles in those areas become dormant. The hair loss is not itchy and the skin will not appear inflamed, though it can sometimes be dry. Usually the areas affected are the throat, chest, belly and the insides of the legs. Sometimes the chest or head and ears may become bald.

Recommendations: Thyroid hormone deficiency can look like this, too, and so can adrenal hormone problems, so laboratory testing may be needed to rule out treatable problems.

Cataracts: A cataract is any opacity or loss of transparency of the lens of the eye. The opacity may be confined to a small area of the lens or capsule, or it may affect the whole structure. A complete cataract affecting both eyes will result in blindness, whereas small non-progressive cataracts will not interfere with vision. Primary cataracts occur in some breeds; in other breeds the cataract may develop secondarily to another inherited disorder such as progressive retinal atrophy or glaucoma.

Recommendation: You may suspect your dog is having visual difficulties and/or you may notice discoloration of your dog's pupil(s). Your veterinarian will be able to see the cataract with an ophthalmoscope. Even when not causing visual problems, cataracts may be discovered on a routine ophthalmologic exam

Hyperadrenocorticism (Cushing's syndrome)

Hyperadrenocorticism, is a common endocrine disorder in dogs. The clinical signs are caused by an excess of cortisol (the body's form of cortisone). This occurs because of increased secretion of cortisol by the adrenal glands in response to an abnormality in the pituitary gland in the brain, or because of a tumour in the adrenal glands themselves. Hyperadrenocorticism may also occur in any dog that is being treated with excessive amounts of glucocorticoids. Glucocorticoid medication, often called steroids, is an important part of therapy in many different conditions in dogs.

Recommendation: Diagnosis is based on typical signs which can be interpreted by your veterinarian. Annual and bi-annual physical exam and routine blood testing will help to identify Cushing's as a potential problem. Confirmatory blood tests need to be performed to determine if the disease is caused by abnormal pituitary stimulation of the adrenal glands, or by an adrenal tumour.

Intervertebral disc disease: This condition is more common in dogs with long backs and short legs. It commonly affects the neck and/or lower back, causing pain and in severe cases, paralysis. The disease is caused when the jelly-like cushion (disc) between one or more vertebrae slips or ruptures, pressing on the spinal cord.

Signs of back/neck pain include unwillingness to jump up or go up stairs, your pet may be reluctant to move around, have a hunched back, refuse to eat, or they may have difficulty squatting to urinate or defecate. As with people, back pain can be severe, leaving some dogs screaming in pain or crying when picked up. If your pet is reluctant to turn their head to the side or lift their head up to meet your gaze they may have neck pain. Severe disc disease can result in nerve damage and pets may drag the back feet or be suddenly paralyzed and be unable to get up and use their back legs.

Recommendation: Weight management helps to prevent this disease as excess weight puts stress on back and neck muscles and joints. Jumping up and down on and off the furniture should be avoided as it can cause excess stress to your pets back as well. Train your pet to use a ramp or steps to get up and down from high places. Use a harness not a neck collar when walking your pet, and never use a choke chain. There are glucosamine based supplements (Osteosupport) available to help keep the soft disc material between the vertebrae spongy and flexible reducing the risk of injury.

Otitis: Ear infections are common in dogs with pendulous ears. Dachshunds are also more prone to allergies and hypothyroidism that also play a factor in ear infections. Signs of ear infection include scratching the ears, shaking the head or pain when the ears are rubbed. There may be a foul smell from the ear and it may be red and sore. Ear infections are very painful and require attention.

Recommendations: If your pet has recurrent ear infections we need to identify any underlying causes and treat for these in order to have success.

Seborrhea: This common skin disease can cause dry, flaky skin or greasy, oily skin. Both forms can lead to an itchy, uncomfortable pet and they make skin infection more likely. Hypothyroidism can lead to seborrhea, as can allergies.

Recommendation: A good diet rich in essential fatty acids helps prevent problems. Bathing with special shampoos is helpful, and any underlying problems such as allergies should be addressed as well. Early treatment of any skin problem is essential to reduce the chance of secondary problems such as yeast or bacteria infections.

Valvular disease: Deterioration of the heart valves is a common aging change in small dog breeds. The valve slowly becomes deformed so that it no longer closes tightly. Blood then can leak back around the valves, causing strain on the heart. Symptoms early on include a soft cough that is most noticeable when the pet first gets up from sleeping or after exercise and your pet may be reluctant to exercise.

Pets with heart valve disease will often have a heart murmur that can be heard with a stethoscope. Heart ultrasound and chest xrays can be done to determine the degree of heart failure. All pets with a heart murmur should have chest x-rays and an ultrasound. These should be repeated annually. If valve disease is diagnosed early, medications can prolong health for many years.

Recommendation: Middle aged adult and older pets should be screened annually for heart disease with chest x-rays. Periodontal disease is the biggest contributing factor to valvular heart disease, so taking care of your dog's teeth is extremely important. Weight management and salt restriction are also important so be careful to feed a high quality recommended pet food, and avoid salty snacks.

RISK	ACTION	DATE CARE IS NEEDED
Intervertebral Disease	Maintain an ideal weight, train to walk on harness, use ramps	
Alopecia	Monitor for hair loss	
Cataracts	Annual, bi-annual ophthalmic exam	
Otitis	Monitor ears, have any problems seen early by the doctor	
Seborrhea	Supplement with fatty acids, bath with appropriate shampoo	
Periodontal Disease	Brush teeth and have professionally examined and cleaned once a year to prevent irreversible damage from infection.	
Valvular disease	Weight management, dental homecare, heart ultrasound.	
Hyperadrenocorticism	Annual and bi-annual physical exams and early detection blood testing	

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Creative – in our use of new technology.

Connected – to our team, to our community and to the leaders in our industry.

Clean – Our hospital will be spotless and odor free.