

CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL CLUBS HEALTH INFORMATION SHEET

December 2009

YOUR CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL

Bright, charming and full of playful enthusiasm a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel has become known as the ideal companion dog, a reputation that this little breed thoroughly deserves. As a new Cavalier owner, you should be looking forward to many long and rewarding years together with the vast majority of Cavaliers being happy, healthy dogs. However, you may already be aware that as with all animals, there is some risk of genetically inherited disease. While conscientious breeders and Kennel Club Accredited Breeders are working continuously with animal health experts to diminish these health problems, it is important that every owner is aware of these conditions and health screening available.

Taking care of your Cavalier King Charles Spaniel

If your puppy has come from a breed club member or an Accredited Breeder it is likely that it comes from health screened stock. While this cannot guarantee that your dog is free from a hereditary condition, health screening is one way that responsible breeders are reducing the risk of passing on pre-existing conditions. There are three main health issues currently screened for in Cavaliers:

Mitral Valve Disease (MVD)
Syringomyelia (SM)
Eye conditions

Mitral Valve Disease

Mitral Valve Disease is a common health problem in older dogs of all breeds although it has been found to have an earlier onset in the Cavalier. The disease causes a degeneration of the heart's mitral valve often picked up as a heart murmur in younger dogs. Many dogs diagnosed with Mitral Valve Disease continue to live to a good age and enjoy a happy life. For Cavaliers, current guidelines recommend a check up for Mitral Valve Disease on an annual basis; this can usually be done by your own vet. Alternatively, most Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Clubs run health clinics with free or low cost checks by a Veterinary Cardiologist.

Syringomyelia

Known by some as "neck scratchers disease" where the dog is seen scratching in the air near the neck, usually when excited or on a lead. The term syringomyelia is a condition where fluid filled cavities (syrinxes) develop within the spinal cord. While some dogs show no or only mild symptoms, unfortunately, in some cases the condition progresses and deteriorates causing the dog pain and neurological problems. Medical interventions can help to alleviate health problems, but very sadly in some cases this is not possible.

Diagnosis for Syringomyelia is by MRI scan. Veterinary clinics operating low cost MRI scanning can be found on the Cavalier Club website together with advice and further information on Syringomyelia.

Eyes

The main inherited genetic eye conditions in Cavaliers are cataract (Congenital and Juvenile), and multifocal retinal dysplasia. Fortunately, both diseases are now much less common as reputable breeders test their stock prior to breeding. However, you should check for the condition if you intend to breed from your Cavalier.

Health Screening is an important part of illuminating health problems in any animal, but should you have concerns about any area of your dog's health always seek and follow professional advice from your vet.

Healthy Future

While a long and disease free life can never be guaranteed for any animal, it is hoped that health screening will eventually minimise conditions related to genetically inherited disease in Cavaliers. Further research, supported by the Kennel Club Charitable Trust is currently being carried out by the Animal Health Trust (AHT) and will aim to assist breeding from healthy stock. Every cavalier owner can help ensure that AHT research is as comprehensive as possible by submitting your dog's annual heart test certificate and MRI scan results to Dr. Sarah Blott at AHT. For details visit www.thecavalierclub.co.uk/.

Breeding from your Cavalier

Breed clubs are a great way to meet other people and gain information from others who are just as passionate about Cavaliers. In the UK there is a national Cavalier Club and nine regional Clubs The clubs have information on everything from current research and health clinics to seminars, shows and 'Pet Pages'.

Breed Clubs will also be a useful source of information should you decide to breed from your Cavalier. Breeding can be enormously rewarding, but you must be aware of the responsibility which this entails. You should ensure that your dog meets recommended guidelines for MVD and SM and has a clear eye certificate issued by the British Veterinary Association/Kennel Club scheme. The Kennel Club also sets out requirements for current testing, and permanent identification of all breeding stock, and the KC Accredited Breeder Scheme on its website.

For more information and details of regional cavalier clubs:

The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club	http://www.thecavalierclub.co.uk
Southern CKCS Club	www.cavalier.info/clubs/southern Secretary Mr G Ford 01264 860376
Eastern Counties CKCS Society	www.cavaliers.co.uk/eastern.htm Secretary Ms M Hogan 01462 670774
West of England CKCS Club	www.cavaliers.co.uk/westofeng/westofeng.htm Secretary Ms D Searle 01455 846087
South & West Wales CKCS Club	www.cavaliers.co.uk/s+ww/index.htm Secretary Mr G Thomas 01495 750559
Midland CKCS Club	www.cavaliers.co.uk/midland.htm Secretary Mrs M Rees 02476 403583
Humberside CKCS Club	www.cavaliers.co.uk/humberside.htm Secretary Mrs L Flynn 01205 760374
Northern CKCS Society	www.northerncavalier.co.uk Secretary Mr I Sidgwick 01228 561209
Scottish CKCS Club	www.cavaliers.co.uk/scottish.htm Secretary Mrs E A Smith 01324 553331
N. Ireland CKCS Club	www.cavaliers.co.uk/northernireland.htm Secretary Miss K Finlay 02890 851333
CKCS Club of Ireland	www.irishcavalierclub.com Sec. Mrs E Hurley 0035 31848 1621
The Kennel Club	www.thekennelclub.org.uk

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