

# Princess Animal Hospital Downtown Animal Hospital

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

## **BREED PREDISPOSITIONS TO DISEASE IN THE MINIATURE AND TOY POODLE CROSSES**

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.

### **ADULT**

**Diabetes:** is common in some breeds. It usually develops in mid-life, between 3 and 10 years of age. Signs include drinking & urinating much more than normal, and weight loss despite a good appetite. If you notice your dog drinking more water, call us right away. This is one of the most common symptoms of illness in dogs, yet one frequently ignored by pet owners.

**Recommendation:** Annual blood and urine screening, sooner if symptoms are present. Weight control is very important to prevent and control diabetes.

**Epilepsy:** Seizures can be caused by multiple diseases. Epilepsy is diagnosed after other causes have been rule out. With epilepsy seizures usually begin between 6 months and 3 years of age. Medications will usually keep seizures under control.

**Recommendation:** If a seizure occurs, blood work and urine tests should be done to rule out other causes. MRI and CT scans are also available. Depending on the frequency medication may be prescribed to control them as they can be life threatening.

**Glaucoma:** is an extremely painful disease of the eye that rapidly leads to blindness. When the fluid that maintains the shape of the eyeball cannot drain out as fast as it is being produced it builds up, causing stretching and swelling of the eyeball. Symptoms include: squinting, watery eyes, cloudiness of the cornea, and the whites of the eyes

may look red. In severe cases the eye may look swollen or bulging. Glaucoma is a medical emergency. If you see symptoms don't wait, call us immediately.

**Recommendation:** Annual glaucoma screening for adult and older poodle crosses. The test we perform measures pressure inside the eye. Early detection could save your pet's sight.

**Immune Mediated Hemolytic Thrombocytopenia/Anemia:** This disease occurs when the immune system goes haywire, and starts attacking the pet's own red blood cells and/or platelets. When the immune system attacks and destroys red blood cells the pet will quickly become anemic. When there aren't enough platelets, blood won't clot properly and the pet will show bruises or abnormal bleeding.

If the pet is becoming anemic, he or she will get weak and lethargic. The gums will look whitish or yellow instead of the normal bright pink color. If the pet has platelets affected you may see small pinpoint bruises on the gums, or larger bruises on the ears, belly or other hairless areas of skin. Sometimes it requires emergency transfusions of red blood cells or platelets. **Recommendation:** Always be aware of your pet's behavior and pay attention to the color of the gums. The lining of the mouth is always one of the first places we look when presented with a sick pet, because it tells us so much about health, dehydration and blood circulation.

**Intervertebral disc disease:** 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.

**Dry eye:** also known as KCS, Keratoconjunctivitis Sicca is a condition that occurs in pets and people that do not make adequate tears to bathe the eye and can affect just one or both eyes. This condition can be very uncomfortable and results in the eyes being itchy, inflamed and painful. Pets with a mild reduction in tears may not show any signs at all while in others the whites of the eyes may look red and pets often have a daily build up of thick grey to green mucus in the affected eye(s). Your pet may rub at their eyes with front paws or rub the sides of their face along the carpet or other surfaces. If they scratch the surface of the eye resulting in a corneal ulcer this is very painful and results in squinting, tearing and possibly a cloudy appearance to the eye. Chronic dry eye results in a brown or black pigment on the surface of the eye. Pets cannot see through this pigment and it is permanent. Severe pigmentation results in blindness. Tear levels are measured using a piece of litmus paper that absorbs tears and gives a linear measurement. This is called a Schirmer Tear Test (STT).

**Recommendation:** The STT screening should be done starting at 4 months of age then annually. In addition, Fluorescein staining should be performed at the same time to ensure no evidence of corneal abrasions/ulcers.

**Otitis:** Poodle crosses often grow hair in their ears which can trap in moisture and cause an infection. In some cases the hair may need to be plucked out of their ear canals. 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 promptly.

**Recommendation:** maintaining a healthy ear environment with routine cleaning with an appropriate product. If your pet has recurrent ear infections we need to identify any underlying causes and treat for these in order to have success. Swimmers need cleaning after each swim.

**Patellar luxation:** The patella is the kneecap, which slides up and down in a groove on the front of the femur, or thighbone. If the groove is too shallow, or the ligaments that hold the kneecap in place tend to pull it off to the side, the patella will luxate, or pop out of place. This usually starts to be a problem after the dog is about six months of age, and often worsens slowly as the dog ages. The more loose the patella and the more often it slips out of place the worse the arthritis that will result, from the scraping of the underside of the patella against the femur.

You may notice that the dog will be running along and suddenly pick up a back leg and skip or hop for a few strides. Then, as he kicks his leg out sideways to pop the patella back in place, he's fine again. If the problem is mild and only involves one leg, the pet may never require much treatment beyond arthritis medication. In more severe cases, surgery is needed to deepen the groove and realign the patella to prevent it from popping out of place. **Recommendation:** Let us know if you notice the occasional hopping steps that occur when the kneecap pops out of place. We usually examine the knees as part of our routine physical exam, but if the kneecap is only a little loose this is something that can easily be missed unless you tell us about it. Medication, physical therapy or a surgery consultation may be recommended. Osteosupport is a glucosamine type product that helps maintain a healthy joint. J/D diet also reduces the rate of arthritis development.

**Periodontal Disease:** Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, with 80% of cats and dogs being affected. Poodle crosses genetically develop more tartar than other breeds. 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 one to three years of life expectancy for your pet!

**Recommendations:** Have your dog's teeth professionally cleaned as recommended by our team. Home care, including tooth brushing and/or T/D diet can help immensely.

**Tracheal collapse:** The trachea, or windpipe, is made up of cartilage rings, making it look something like a vacuum cleaner's ridged hose. Just as in the hose, this structure provides flexibility and strength. In toy breeds, sometimes the cartilage rings are weak or malformed. When this is the case the trachea can collapse and become too narrow. This leads to coughing and difficulty breathing.

Most cases of tracheal collapse are mild and are treated symptomatically with cough suppressant medications. In severe cases surgery can be done to reconstruct the trachea and make it more rigid.

**Recommendation:** Because there are many parts of the cardiovascular/respiratory system that can be responsible for coughing chest X-rays are recommended with any persistent cough.

**Skin conditions:** Poodle crosses are prone to a variety of skin problems, including alopecia (pattern baldness) in the flank area in miniature poodle crosses and hypotrichosis in toy and miniature poodle crosses. An adrenal hormone disease called Cushing's disease is a common cause of hair loss in older poodle crosses, and hypothyroidism – deficiency in thyroid hormones – also causes hair loss.

**Recommendation:** Bring any problems with your pet's skin or coat to the attention of your veterinarian so that the appropriate diagnosis and treatment recommendations can be made.

**Bladder Stones:** There are different types of stones that can form in the bladder, and certain breeds of dog are prone to certain types of stones. Symptoms of bladder stones include blood in the urine, straining to urinate or inability to urinate if the urethra is blocked with small stones or crystals. Surgical removal is the preferred treatment for all bladder stones. We can obtain a definitive diagnosis when the stones have been removed and sent for analysis.

**Recommendation:** The key to prevention is dietary management and regular monitoring for the *life* of the pet. We recommend a complete analysis of your pet's urine annually or immediately if they develop symptoms.

**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. Chest X-rays and other testing can be done to determine the degree of heart failure. All pets with a heart murmur should have chest x-rays and ultrasound, these should be repeated annually. If valve disease is diagnosed early, medications can prolong health.

**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 NEEDED
Dental disease	Brush teeth and have professionally cleaned once a year to prevent irreversible damage from infection.	
Diabetes	Annual blood and urine screen	
Epilepsy	Monitor for seizures	
Glaucoma	Annual eye pressure exams	
Immune mediated anemia	CBC prior to surgery and annual screening, monitor	

	gum colour	
Intervertebral disc disease	Weight management, cosequin	
Dry eye	Tear test annually from 4 months	
Otitis	Monitor for redness or debris	
Patellar luxation	Inform us of any lameness	
Tracheal collapse	Chest x-rays annually from 7 yrs or if cough present	
Skin conditions	Thyroid testing annually	
Bladder stones	Urinalysis annually, appropriate diet	
Valvular disease	Annual chest x-rays	

***Compassionate*** – as we tend to your pet’s needs.

***Committed*** – to offering the best care for your pet.

***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.