

Princess Animal Hospital Downtown Animal Hospital

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

BREED PREDISPOSITION TO DISEASE IN THE DALMATIAN

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 their 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.

ACL tear: A torn anterior cruciate ligament in the knee is the most common orthopedic injury of active dogs. It usually requires surgical repair and weeks of rehabilitation. Instability in a joint results in severe arthritis.

Recommendations: A high quality, diet promotes strong muscles, ligaments, tendons & bones, and has been shown to reduce injury rates. Sensible exercise routines help prevent injuries. Dogs that do a lot of leaping, as with Frisbee tossing or agility work, are more vulnerable. Obesity is also a risk factor, as overweight dogs are much more likely to have injuries to joints.

Hip Dysplasia: Is a malformation of the hip joint(s) resulting in instability of the joint and subsequent arthritis. Other related conditions occur in the elbow and hock joints.

Recommendations: X-rays of the hips should be taken when your dog is young to identify the disease early. Good X-rays are required to diagnose this condition so a short acting anesthetic is recommended to relax your pet to facilitate taking a good radiograph. A perfect time to screen young pets is at the time of spay or neuter. Older pets can take advantage of an anesthetic for a dental cleaning and have their hips screened at that time.

Early detection allows us to provide appropriate supplements to slow the progression of arthritis as well as a good quality diet and exercise program tailored to your pet's lifestyle. Keeping your dog fit reduces stress on joints and will also slow the progression of arthritis, minimizing the use of medications needed to manage pain as the disease does progress.

Atopy: Atopy is an allergy to substances that are either inhaled or exposed to your pet's skin such as pollens, mold & mildew spores or dust mites. Instead of the hay fever symptoms humans get, dogs usually get itchy with face, feet & ears being the most common locations. Symptoms typically start between the ages of 2 - 5 years. Allergies tend to gradually get worse with the itch lasting longer from year to year. Many pets eventually suffer from allergies year round.

Recommendation: Daily essential fatty acids supplementation has been shown to reduce the effects of atopy. Several antihistamines have been used with success; please consult us before treating your pet with any human products. The key to allergy management is early detection to prevent severe and sometimes chronic secondary infections.

Cardiomyopathy: Dilated Cardiomyopathy, or DCM, is a heart problem in which the heart becomes larger, thinner & weaker until it can no longer effectively pump blood to the body. Signs may be gradual heart failure or sometimes sudden death from an irregular heart rhythm. In Dalmatians cardiomyopathy tends to be a milder form and many do very well on heart medications.

Recommendation: Ultrasound screening at 16 months of age, and then as recommended by the cardiologist is needed to detect early changes in the heart. If your pet's heart function becomes compromised, chest radiographs may also be needed. Chest x-rays are not useful in early screening and ultrasound is the best tool.

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. It 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), named after the person who invented it!

Recommendation: The STT screening should be done starting at 4 months of age then annually. Additionally, your veterinarian will perform a Fluorescein stain to check for corneal abrasions or ulcers (commonly associated with KCS)

Laryngeal paralysis: Older large breed dogs are frequently affected by this disease, in which the folds of the larynx become paralyzed and hang down into the airway. Affected dogs will have noisy breathing, especially with exercise or in hot, humid weather. In severe cases dogs can collapse from lack of air. This is a surgical emergency! The folds of the larynx must be pulled back out of the airway.

Dalmatians are also prone to elongated soft palate as they get older. This is when the soft part of the roof of the mouth sags and stretches until it hangs down into the airway. This also causes noisy breathing and can be surgically corrected.

Recommendation: if you notice your dog's breathing becoming noisy, have it investigated. Please don't wait until the surgery becomes an emergency.

Cancers: There are as many types of cancer as there are types of cells in the body. A tumor is simply the out of control reproduction of a particular type of cell. The cells multiply when they are not supposed to, forming a lump or spreading via the lymphatic system or the bloodstream to other parts of the body.

Different breeds are prone to different types, although almost any kind of cancer can occur in any breed. Cancer is the most common cause of death of pets over age twelve. Dalmatians are prone to solar keratitis (inflammation due to sunburn) and cutaneous Hemangioma – a benign type of skin tumor.

Recommendation: Half of all cancers are cured by surgically removing them, so early detection and removal is critical. Have all lumps and bumps looked at and investigate signs of illness promptly, especially in older pets. Keep fair-skinned pets out of the sun. Most importantly, feed a high quality diet enriched with fatty acids and antioxidants that help prevent cancer. Keep your pet lean as fat cells release toxins that damage other cells and obese pets have much higher cancer rates.

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. Dalmatians are prone to urate 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. This type of stone is difficult to deal with via dissolution.

Recommendation: Adult Dalmatians should eat Hill's U/D food unless some other health problem takes precedence. We recommend a complete analysis of your pet's urine annually or immediately if they develop symptoms. Stones may be suspected if blood or crystals are seen in a urine sample test. If stones are suspected we recommend an x-ray or ultrasound to diagnose its presence.

RISK	ACTION	DATE CARE NEEDED
ACL tear	Good quality diet, sensible exercise, fit body weight	Please ask us today.
Periodontal Disease	Brush teeth and have professionally examined and cleaned once a year to prevent irreversible damage from infection.	
Hip dysplasia	Hip X-rays with spay / neuter and a good quality diet, supplements	
Atopy-allergies	Daily essential fatty acid supplement +/- antihistamines	If itch is noticed.
Cardiomyopathy	Heart ultrasound to be scheduled at the 16 month preventive health care visit. X-rays if needed.	
Dry eye	Annual schirmer tear test starting at 4 months	

Laryngeal paralysis	Awareness	If loud breathing noticed.
Cancers	Check all new lumps, avoid intense sun, good quality diets	If a lump is found.
Bladder stones	Annual urine testing, bladder x-ray and/or ultrasound and U/D diet for adults.	

For more information about your pet's care, please contact us.

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.