

HEALTH PROBLEMS IN OUR BREED

Hip Dysplasia

Hip Dysplasia (HD) is a developmental disease in which there is a malformation of the hip joint(s). It is a genetic disease which may also be influenced by environmental factors. It is a common problem in most large breeds, and depending on severity, can cause serious pain and/or debilitation. HD is almost never detectable in animals younger than six months, and then in only the most severe cases. Two years is generally considered the minimum age for accurate diagnosis.



An xray of bad hips.

The Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) maintains a Hip Dysplasia Registry, which functions as a diagnostic service and a registry of hip status for dogs of all breeds. X-rays are evaluated by three veterinary radiologists, and are assigned a hip status of Excellent, Good, Fair, Borderline, Mild Dysplasia, Moderate Dysplasia or Severe Dysplasia. Dogs receiving evaluations of Excellent, Good or Fair are assigned an OFA Breed Registry Number. Only dogs that are at least 24 months of age are eligible for an OFA Number.



Xray of good hips.

In an effort to reduce the incidence of HD, responsible Rottweiler breeders will not breed dogs which have not received OFA clearance. Puppies should only be purchased after careful evaluation of the hip dysplasia status of the parents and the grandparents. The breeder of the puppies should be able to provide copies of the OFA certificates (on official stationery from the OFA). This is not a guarantee that your puppy will not develop HD later on; research has documented the fact that normal parents can produce litters with one third or more of the puppies dysplastic as adults. Genetics may be the cause of dysplasia but environmental factors such as over-feeding, over exercise and injury of young animals may also contribute to this disease.

Elbow Dysplasia

Like hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia is a hereditary disease. It is a malformation of the elbow joint(s). OFA certifies elbows on a pass/fail basis. As with hip dysplasia, your breeder should be able to show you reports from the OFA defining the conformation of both parent's elbows.

Osteochondrosis Dissecans (OCD)

OCD is a disease of bone formation that leads to lameness and arthritis. It results from a disturbance of the process by which cartilage is turned into bone during the growth process. Abnormally thickened cartilage forms in areas of the joints that are subject to stress and, hence, prone to damage. Cracks form, and the cartilage can tear, forming a flap. This flap may remain attached to the bone, or it may tear away and float freely in the joint. The cracks, flap or free cartilage piece lead to inflammation of the joint (arthritis), pain and lameness. More than one joint is often affected simultaneously. In dogs, the most commonly affected joint is the shoulder, followed by the elbow, hock and knee.

Panosteitis

Sometimes referred to as "growing pains" or "pano", panosteitis occurs as a rotating lameness, usually in puppies about four months of age. There are tests for pano which should be done to rule out more serious problems. Sometimes crate rest is all a puppy needs for complete recovery.

Von Willebrand's Disease (VWD)

VWD is a hereditary a bleeding disorder similar to hemophilia. Dogs affected with VWD may have symptoms ranging from prolonged bleeding of toenails cut short to hemorrhaging during minor surgical procedures. Dogs may be carriers while exhibiting no outward symptoms. VWD is diagnosed through blood screening.

Bloat

Bloat is a common condition in which the stomach swells from gas, fluid or both. Bloat becomes a medical emergency when the stomach distends and then flips over, causing torsion. Bloat and torsion may be caused by over-eating, drinking large amounts of water after eating, and/or vigorous exercise after a meal. Efforts to prevent bloat may include feeding several small meals a day, crating the dog for several hours after eating, and monitoring water intake.

Purdue Study On Bloat: <http://www.vet.purdue.edu/epi/bloat.htm>

Heart Diseases

The most common heart problem seen in Rottweilers is Sub-Aortic Stenosis. This disorder can be very mild or so serious that it results in sudden death. Reputable breeders, working with canine cardiologists, hope to identify the mode of inheritance of this and other heart problems.

Allergies

Some Rottweilers are prone to flea and/or food allergies. Symptoms and severity of the allergies vary from dog to dog.

Eye Diseases

Entropion (eyelids rolling inward) and Ectropion (Eyelids rolling outward) are inherited conditions which require surgical correction. Both of these conditions disqualify a dog from being shown in AKC conformation competition.

Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA), Central Progressive Retinal Atrophy (CPRA) and certain types of Cataracts are inherited conditions. Dogs used for breeding should be examined annually by a Board-certified Veterinary ophthalmologist, until at least eight years of age, as hereditary eye problems may not present themselves until later in life. Dogs examined by a Board-certified Veterinary Ophthalmologist and found to be free of hereditary eye disease may be registered annually with the Canine Eye Registry Foundation (CERF).

Epilepsy

Epilepsy may result from injury to the head or from bacterial infections of the brain. If no such cause is found, it is regarded to be congenital. Congenital epilepsy can be an inherited trait, and has been observed in many breeds. The term epilepsy refers to recurring episodic seizures/convulsions. The episodes can be triggered by fatigue, excitement, anxiety, noise or in females, by estrus. It may be controlled with medication. Obviously, breeding is not recommended.

Hypothyroidism

Hypothyroidism refers to insufficient output of the thyroid hormone by the thyroid gland. It may slow down the whole body functions; the dog may become lethargic, mentally slow, without much energy. Its coat may become dull, thin and fall out easily. In males it can lower the sperm count and reduce sexual activity. In females it may cause irregular heat cycles. The signs may develop very slowly, and the condition can be detected with a blood test. Usually, it is a permanent condition, and is treated with thyroid hormones. Hypothyroid is generally considered to be an inherited trait.

Cancer

Cancer is becoming a very common condition in the Rottweiler breed, with bone cancer being the most frequent type. Any suspicious lumps, moles, sores or unexplained lameness should be investigated by your veterinarian.

Fleas? Try this recipe for a Natural Flea Spray!

Bring a quart of water just to a boil. Pour it over a fat sliced lemon and a tablespoon of crushed rosemary leaves. Let this sit overnight. Strain and put in a spray bottle. If you have a serious infestation, pour the whole batch in the tub as a rinse after a bath with a good herbal shampoo. Leave on and rub in for five minutes.