

The 2002 English Cocker Spaniel
Health Survey Report

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Background:

The English Cocker Spaniel Club of America requested a general health survey for English Cocker Spaniels. The purpose was to find possible emerging breed-related health problems, so that concerns and breed problems can be addressed. Previous surveys were used as a basis for the current survey.

Methods:

The survey was mailed to all members of the English Cocker Spaniel Club of America between December 31, 2001 and January 10, 2002 requesting responses by February 14, 2002. It was noted that if a member did not want to participate or no longer had an English Cocker, then they should return the blank survey. Postcard reminders were sent out in June and October 2002. Another copy of the survey was sent out in October 2003. New addresses on the mailing list required an additional postcard reminder in March 2004.

Answers from the surveys were compiled into excel spreadsheets under each survey identification number. Then data was sorted into tables for easier analysis. In most cases, variables (i.e. age, color, and sex) were specifically noted in the tables. It should be made clear that ages are in years, except when noted.

Results:

There were 487 English Cocker Spaniel owners and members of the club who responded; 287 of these were breeders. Originally, 812 members were sent surveys; however, 67 of these no longer had dogs, had died, were not members, or had bad addresses. Sixteen blank forms were returned, and there were 487 responses, therefore we had a 65% response rate. Possible reasons as to why the rest did not reply cannot be certain. Reasons could include: 1) too time consuming; 2) too many dogs to include; 3) too many health problems; 4) very few or no health problems; 5) have not recently owned English Cocker Spaniels; 6) some other unknown reason. The higher the response rate, then the more accurate and conclusive the data. The survey did include a total of 3,537 English Cocker Spaniels. The top problems in the dogs were: bite problems (7.63%), skin allergies (4.16%), shyness (3.53%), cataracts (3.31%), deafness (2.86%), aggression towards other dogs (2.8%), and benign tumors (2.52%).

The majority of the dogs in the survey were parti-colored. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents were breeders who bred an average of one litter per year, with an average of four puppies per litter. The most common reproductive problems in female dogs were irregular heat cycles and difficulty whelping, this accounted for 46% of the female reproductive problems. In male dogs cryptorchidism was the most common, accounting for 60% of the male reproductive problems. Leading causes of death in the dogs were old age and cancer.

Blood disorders were extremely rare. No dogs surveyed had been diagnosed with hemophilia. Bone and joint problems were extremely rare. Hip dysplasia occurred in less than 2% of the dogs and only 1% of the dogs had any type of disk problems. Eighty-three dogs had some form of cancer and eighty-nine dogs had benign tumors. Together this accounts for only 5% of the dogs. Cardiovascular diseases were low, with less than 2% of the dogs having heart murmurs. Allergies affected approximately 4% of the dogs (147 cases), with 15 cases being affected by Demodex.

Forty-three percent of the dogs have been BAER tested. Almost 3% of the dogs had deafness in either one or both ears. From the dogs that produced deaf puppies, 44 puppies had incomplete masks and 12 had blue eyes. Approximately 8% of the dogs surveyed had chronic ear infections. Hypothyroidism was the most common endocrine disease, but only affecting just over 1% of the dogs.

Cataracts occurred in 3% of the dogs; and slightly less than 1% of the dogs had blue eyes. Gastrointestinal problems only affected approximately 2% of the dogs. Sixty-eight dogs (2%) suffered from seizures, while only thirteen were maintained on anticonvulsants. Eight percent of the dogs had bite problems, with half of these having an undershot mouth. Six percent had lip fold infections.

One percent of the dogs were aggressive to people, while two percent were aggressive to other dogs. Shyness affected 4% of the dogs. Urinary and kidney problems affected 3% of the dogs; one percent had bladder crystals.

Nineteen percent of owners with dogs had experienced vaccine reactions. Pica was a problem that 37% of owners had encountered. The OptiGen DNA marker test for prcd had been used by 95% of dog owners. Eighty-six percent of owners felt that it is important for the ECSCA to maintain a special account for health research, with almost 60% of the respondents already have or plan to contribute to the account. Eighty-two percent felt that health concerns were very important.

SPANIEL OWNERS

	# of owners
parti-colored	413
solid-colored	138
hybrid	56
deceased dogs	450
average life span	12
median # of cockers on premises	5
minimum # of cockers on premises	1
maximum # of cockers on premises	100
Total # Owners (including breeders)	487
Total # Breeders	287
Total # cockers in survey	3537

REPRODUCTION

Breeding

owners that breed cockers	287
average litter/year/owner	1
average puppies/litter	4
median puppies/litter	4
maximum puppies/litter	8

Female Reproductive Problems

	# of dogs
irregular heat cycles	87
difficult whelping	82
failure to conceive	73
failure to carry to term	35
insufficient milk	29
chronic false pregnancies	27
other reproductive problems	38
Total	371

Poor Mothering Instinct:	# of dogs
not wanting to feed puppies	9
not wanting to clean puppies	8
ignored puppies	6
too much licking/nipped too close to umbilical site	2
trouble whelping	1
stepped/laid on 1st litter	1
turned on puppies for few days then fine	1
wanted to separate puppies and care for separately	1
Total	29

Pyometra:	
number affected	39
median age	5
minimum age	6 months
maximum age	13
number that conceived after treatment	6

Puppy Problems

Problems:	# of dogs
swimmers	77
cleft palate	70
inguinal hernia	60
incomplete ab closure	19
hydrocephalus	4
congenital defects (hermaphroditism)	20
other puppy problems	66
Total	316

Male Reproductive Problems

Problems:	# of dogs
cryptorchidism	116
abnormal semen	17
lack of libido	9
testicular atrophy	7
congenital defects	3
other male reproductive problems	40
Total	192

COMMON CAUSES OF DEATH

old age	173	autoimmune clotting disorder	1
cancer	101	birthing	1
unthrifty puppy	33	colon defect	1
kidney failure	15	c-section complications	1
unknown	11	degenerative myelopathy	1
cleft palate	9	degenerative nerve and muscle disease	1
congestive heart failure	9	diabetes	1
heart problems	9	dog fight	1
pancreatitis	7	early onset PRA	1
euthanized	5	failure to nurse	1
prematurity	5	hemolytic anemia	1
autoimmune disorder	4	hypoglycemia	1
autoimmune hemolytic anemia	3	Inflammatory bowel disease	1
cars	2	Irritable bowel syndrome	1
choking accident	2	ITP	1
cushings disease	2	liver disease	1
FN	2	lung disease	1
heart attack	2	mother sat on pup	1
hip dysplasia	2	neurologic disease	1
hypothermia	2	nut poisoning	1
leukemia	2	pulmonary edema	1
natural	2	puppy bloat	1
pneumonia	2	saccular bronchiectasis	1
accident	1	spinal cord tumor	1
acute nephritis	1	stillborn	1
aggression	1	temperament	1
antifreeze poisoning	1	twisted bowel	1

HEALTH PROBLEMS

Blood Disorders

Platelet function disorder	7
Hemophilia in males	0
Hemophilia in females	0
Von Willebrands dz in males	3
Von Willebrands dz in females	3
Other Blood Disorders	11

Bones/Joints

Testing:	# of Owners
OFA tested	363
Penn-Hip tested	19

Brachydactyl-short toe/s:	# of dogs
Front/Rt.	17
Front/Lf.	3
Back/Rt.	0
Back/Lf.	0
Front/unk	4
Front/Both	22
Back/Both	1
Total	47
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs	1.33%

Patellar Luxation:	# of dogs
medial	13
lateral	22
unknown medial or lateral	12
male	17
female	29
unknown sex	1
median age	1
minimum age	3 months
maximum age	12
Total	47
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs	1.33%

Hip Dysplasia:	# of dogs
solid colored	18
parti-colored	31
male	18
female	29
unknown sex	2
Total	49
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs	1.39%

Other Bone/Joint Problems	24
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Disk Problems

Location:	Age	Male	Female
cervical	6		1
	8	1	
	8	1	
	8		1
	9		1
	10	1	
back	15		1
	4	1	
	7		1
	8	1	
	13	?	?
mid-back	?	1	
	5	1	
	8	1	
T11-12	9	1	
	7	1	
	8	1	
T12-13	12		1
	8	1	
TL junction	7		1
6th lumbar	6	1	
	2		1
lumbar	8	1	
	8		1
	8		1
	9	1	
	9		1
	11	1	
	11	1	
	13	1	
	13		1
	spine	11	
unknown	2		1
	8		1
	10	1	
	11	1	
	12	1	
Median Age:			8
Total # of males:			20
Total # of Females:			15
Total			36
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs			1.02%

Cancer						
Type	Location	Male	Female	Both	Age	
Hemangiosarcoma						
	abdomen		1		8	
	abdomen/liver	1			13	
	liver		1		10	
	lung		1		10	
	spleen		1		9	
	unknown		1		9	
				1	11	
			1		11	
Median Age					10	
Minimum Age					8	
Maximum Age					13	
Total					8	
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs					0.23%	

Lymphoma						
	abdomen		1		5	
				1	10	
	all over			1	1.5	
		?	?		14	
	breast			1	12	
				1	12	
	cecum	1			14	
	ear	1			12	
	lymph glands			1	4	
				1	7	
	neck			1	10	
				1	11	
	neck/jaw	1			12	
	pancreas			1	11	
	skin			1	13	
	unknown	1			12	
			1		12	
				1	7	
				1	7	
				1	8	
				1	11	
				1	11	
				1	12	

	1	13
	1	12
Median Age		11
Minimum Age		2
Maximum Age		14
Total		26
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs		0.74%

Mast Cell Tumors

abdomen	1	10
all over	1	10
anal apocrine gland	1	12
anus	1	10
arm pit	1	10
breast	1	9
	1	12
breast/liver/gut		1 6
by tail	1	8
chest	1	6
colon	1	10
ear/lip	1	6
heart	1	7
hip	1	10
intestine	1	13
lungs	1	4
mammary system	1	11
rear leg	1	1.5
shoulder	1	0.75
sinus	1	?
stomach	1	13
unknown	1	8
	1	10
	1	11
	1	14
Median Age		10
Minimum Age		9 months
Maximum Age		14
Total		26
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs		0.74%

Melanoma

back	1	12
chest	? ? ?	?
inner lip	1	11
mouth	1	11.5

shoulder	1	5
testicular	1	10
tongue	1	10
unknown	1	7
	1	10
	1	13
Median Age		10
Minimum Age		5
Maximum Age		13
Total		10
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs		0.28%

Osteosarcoma

chest	1	13
hips/spine	1	9
jaw	1	12
Median Age		12
Minimum Age		9
Maximum Age		13
Total		3
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs		0.08%

Squamous Cell Tumors

anus	1	13
ear	1	13
	1	4
heart	1	10
jaw	1	12
neck	1	4
shoulder	1	2
side	1	9
unknown	1	15
	1	6
Median Age		10
Minimum Age		2
Maximum Age		15
Total		10
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs		0.28%

Total # Cancer Disorders	83
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs	2.35%

Benign Tumors					
Type	Location	Male	Female	Both	Age
Adenoma					
	mammary gland		1		11
Median Age					11
Minimum Age					11
Maximum Age					11
Total					1
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs					0.03%
Fatty					
	abdomen			1	10
	back		1		9
	belly	1			14
		1			15
		1			7
	body			1	9
	chest	1			7
			1		10
	leg		1		4
	lower back		1		6
	mammary glands		1		14
	neck		1		9
	ribs	1			-
	shoulder		1		8
	side		1		7
	sternum	1			10
	stomach/back leg		1		7
	torso		1		10
	under front legs	1			12.5
	unknown			1	7
Median Age					9
Minimum Age					4
Maximum Age					15
Total					23
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs					0.65%
Histiocytoma					
	ear/neck/tongue	1			-
	left forelimb	1			14
	flank/other		1		-
	unknown		1		2

side	1	2
base of tail	1	6
tail/upper right hind leg	1	2
Median Age		2
Minimum Age		2
Maximum Age		14
Total		7
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs		0.20%

Lipoma

neck/chest/sides	1	12
torso	1	7
left upper thigh	1	7
between ribs & hip	1	-
chest	1	14
rib	1	13.5
back/stifle	1	-
everywhere	1	8
upper lip	1	2
hip	1	-
head/neck/thigh	1	-
shoulder		-
Median Age		8
Minimum Age		2
Maximum Age		14
Total		13
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs		0.37%

Mole

chest/lip	1	7
Median Age		7
Minimum Age		7
Maximum Age		7
Total		1
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs		0.03%

Plasma Cell

mouth	1	7.5
	1	9
Median Age		8
Minimum Age		7.5
Maximum Age		9
Total		2

% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs	0.06%
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Sebaceous

all over	1	14
back	1	8
Median Age		11
Minimum Age		8
Maximum Age		14
Total		2
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs		0.06%

Sebaceous Adenoma

various	1	7
Median Age		7
Minimum Age		7
Maximum Age		7
Total		1
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs		0.03%

Skin

under chin	1	3
ear/back	1	10
Median Age		6.5
Minimum Age		3
Maximum Age		10
Total		2
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs		0.06%

Skin tags

various	1	8
Median Age		8
Minimum Age		8
Maximum Age		8
Total		1
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs		0.03%

Unknown

around nipple	1	7
back	1	6
bowel	1	8
breast	1	-
	1	10
	1	9
chest	1	12
ear	1	1

ear drum		1	-
ear/back leg		1	4
elbow	1		4
face/lip/anal area	1		8
inside front foot	1		-
intestine		1	10
leg		1	7
mammary		1	8
		1	-
		1	13.5
		1	13.5
mammary gland		1	9.5
		1	13
mouth	1		11
neck	1		6
		1	11
		1	-
neck/lip	1		10
right front pad		1	6
roof of mouth	1		5
shoulder	1		2
		1	-
teats		1	10
under tail/on stomach		1	12
unknown	1		16
		1	-
Median Age			9
Minimum Age			1
Maximum Age			16
Total			35
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs			0.99%

Warts

face/neck/back		1	13
Median Age			13
Minimum Age			13
Maximum Age			13
Total			1
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs			0.03%

Total # Benign Tumors			89
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs			2.52%

Cardiovascular

	COLOR			SEX			AGE			Total	% Affected
	Solid	Parti	Unk.	Male	Female	Unk.	Median	Min.	Max.		
Cardiomyopathy	4	9	1	8	6	0	5	1	12	14	0.40%
Heart murmur	15	30	5	27	19	4	6	0	15	50	1.41%
Patent ductus arter.	0	2	0	2	0	0	-	-	-	2	0.06%
Tetralogy of fallot	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	0	0.00%
Ventr. Septal Defects	1	2	0	3	0	0	-	-	-	3	0.08%
Pulmonary Stenosis	1	2	1	1	1	2	12	5	13	4	0.11%
Subaortic Stenosis	0	2	0	2	0	0	0.11	0.10	0.12	2	0.06%

Dermatology

Allergies	# of Cases
skin	24
Demodex	15
fleas	14
unspecified food	12
itchy/watery eyes	9
grass	8
trees	8
seasonal	6
yeasty ears	6
dust/dust mites	5
corn	4
pollen	4
poultry	4
wheat	4
beef	3
dairy products	2
inhalants	2
lamb	2
soy	2
unspecified grain	2
blood allergies	1
cat fur	1
cockroaches	1
detergents	1
dry nose	1
ear medication	1
mosquitoes	1

off shore winds	1
spiders/bees	1
staph	1
yeast infection	1
Total	147
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs	4.16%

Autoimmune	# of Cases
Histiocytomas	2
Addisons	1
Clotting Disorder	1
Cracked Nose	1
ITTP	1
Lupus	1
Nasal Discoid Lupus	1
Non-Systemic Lupus	1
Rare Skin Cancer	1
Severe Ear/Vulva Yeast Infection	1
Skin Lesions from spaying/hormones	1
Total	12
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs	0.34%

Other skin/coat problems	41
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs	1.16%

Ears	
Congenital Deafness:	# of Cases
One Ear	62
Both Ears	33
Unknown Ears	6
Solid Colored	1
Parti Colored	77
Unknown Color	23
BAER Tested	118
Total Deaf	101
% of Affected Dogs Per Total # of Dogs	2.86%
Total # BAER Tested Dogs	1521
If deaf, produced:	
Incomplete Masks	44
Blue Eyes	12
Chronic Ear Infections	291
Other Ear Problems	56
% Affected Per Total # of Dogs w/ Other Ear Problems	1.58%

Endocrine					
	Median Age	Male	Female	Total	% of Affected Dogs
Addison's Disease	6	5	6	11	0.31%
Autoimmune Hemolytic Anemia	7	10	15	25	0.71%
Cushings Disease	9	3	3	6	0.17%
Diabetes Mellitus	10	1	2	3	0.08%
Hypothyroidism	4	17	34	51	1.44%
Liver Disease/Failure	9	4	6	10	0.28%
Lupus (Systemic)	2	?	?	1	0.03%
Pemphigus	-	-	-	0	-
Pancreatic Insufficiency	10	2	5	7	0.20%
Polyarthritis	4	1	5	6	0.17%
Thrombocytopenia	9	1	6	7	0.20%
Other Immune Mediated Diseases				9	0.25%

Eyes

PRCD:

Median Age	6
ACVO Confirmed	46
Total Cases	56
% of Affected Dogs	1.58%

Cataracts:

Median Age	9
ACVO Confirmed	55
Solid Colored	19
Parti Colored	96
Both	2
Total Cases	117
% of Affected Dogs	3.31%

Blue Eyes:

One Eye	19
Both Eyes	9
Unknown Eyes	4
Partial	26
Complete	6
Total	32
% of Affected Dogs	0.90%

Keratoconjunctivitis:

Median Age	9
Total Cases	37
% of Affected Dogs	1.05%

Testing:

	# of Owners	
CERF'd Annually	251	51.5%
Board Certified Ophthalmologist	284	58.3%

Other Eye Problems

	71	2.01%
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Gastroenterology

	Total	% of Affected Dogs
Bloat	9	0.25%
Irritable Bowel Syndrome	31	0.88%
Other Gastro Problems	16	0.45%

Neurology

Seizures

Males	33
Females	31
Unknown Sex	4
Solid Colored	4
Parti Colored	50
Unknown Color	9
Median Age at Onset	6
Maintained on an anticonvulsant	13
Total	68
% of Affected Dogs	1.92%

Teeth & Mouth

Bite Problems	Total	% of Affected Dogs
Undershot	142	4.01%
Overshot	34	0.96%
Wry	41	1.16%
Unknown	53	1.50%
Total Bite Problems	270	7.63%
Missing Teeth	6	0.17%
Extra Teeth	31	0.88%
Retained Deciduous Teeth	134	3.79%
Lip Fold Infection	219	6.19%
Other Tooth/Mouth Problems	56	1.58%

Temperament

Aggression	Total	% of Affected Dogs
People	31	0.88%
Other dogs	99	2.80%
Solid Colored	31	
Parti Colored	64	
Unknown Color	15	
Total	110	3.11%

Shyness	Total	% of Affected Dogs
Solid Colored	31	
Parti Colored	78	
Unknown Color	16	
Total	125	3.53%

Other Temperament Problems	34	0.96%
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Urinary Tract (Kidney)

Bladder Disease	Total	% of Affected Dogs
Stones	16	0.45%
Crystals	39	1.10%

Familial Renal Disease	Total	% of Affected Dogs
Median Age at Onset	1.5	
Solid Colored	1	
Parti Colored	9	
Unknown Color	1	
Total # Cases	11	0.31%

Unspecified Kidney Disease	20	0.57%
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Other Urinary Problems	36	1.02%
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OWNER RESPONSE

Respondent Input

Number of Owners with Dogs that:

Experienced Vaccine Reactions	94
Have Problem with Pica	180
Tested with OptiGen	463

Reasons Owners have not used OptiGen

Lack Confidence in Test	47
Too Expensive	79
Both	85
Other Reason	103

Other Health Concerns	50
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Respondent Ideas

Owners that:

Believe it is important for the ECSCA to maintain a special account for health research	419
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Have, or plan to contribute to this account	287
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Have ever contacted a member of the Health Education Committee to obtain info	190
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Believe that health concerns are :

Very important	399
Somewhat important	30
Of little importance	2

Find fellow breeders/stud owners honest in their evaluations of health problems with their dogs	182
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