

Kooikerhondje Breed Information for Veterinarians

The Kooikerhondje (coy-cur-hund-che) is a small, lively, and intelligent Dutch spaniel. While overall a healthy breed, a small number of Kooikers may be prone to a few diseases. The Kooikerhondje Club of the USA works closely with the breed's Dutch parent club (the VHNK) to maintain an international database of health information on Kooikerhondjes. Submission of all health data is encouraged, even from pet dogs. Utrecht University is the only lab that processes and develops screening tests for our breed, and for that reason we may coordinate access to their vets for consultations. If you have a Kooikerhondje patient that you suspect may be exhibiting symptoms of a hereditary disorder, please contact the dog's breeder and either the KCUSA's confidential Health & Genetics Committee (healthgenetics@kooikerhondjeusa.org) or the VHNK's Information Committee (info-cie@kooikerhondje.nl).

Kooikerhondjes have a unique temperament that is likely to manifest as fear in the clinic, so we encourage fear-free practices and "happy visits" in addition to ongoing training and socialization by the owner, especially through their extended period of adolescence. Kooikers do not have the MDR1 mutation, but there is evidence both in published papers and anecdotally that they may be fatally sensitive to isoxazolines. Although spaniels, they only very rarely experience allergy or ear problems, and are generally quite healthy dogs. Below are some breed-specific health problems that are of particular concern to the Kooikerhondje community:

Potential Health Issues - Screening Tests Available (results reported to OFA)

- **Von Willebrand's disease** type 3 – screening still done, but no longer seen in population
- **ENM (Hereditary Necrotizing Myelopathy)** – a fatal progressive paralysis affecting young dogs, beginning with loss of coordination in the pelvic limbs and swallowing/eating problems. Autosomal recessive inheritance. Carriers still seen in the population. Screening done by blood sample submitted to Utrecht U.
- **Patella Luxation** – low grades relatively common in population, so please check patellas at every puppy visit. Official screening done by veterinarian once dog is over 1 year of age.
- **Hip dysplasia** – not commonly seen in the breed, however screening via OFA radiographs over age 2 recommended to avoid increased prevalence.
- **Hereditary eye disorders** – cataracts, retinal dysplasia, and distichiasis are occasionally seen in the breed. Screening done over 1 year of age via CERF exam with ophthalmologist.

Potential Health Issues - Screening Tests NOT Available (Please report these if suspected!)

- **Polymyositis** – a progressive autoimmune disease causing chronic muscle inflammation and weakness. Prognosis is poor and this disease affects about 1% of the population with (currently) no genetic screening test available. Two presentations seen: relatively young dogs with swallowing or eating problems, and then young to middle age dogs with more musculoskeletal problems +/- swallowing problems. Symptoms include reduced endurance/exhaustion, muscle weakness, swallowing problems/inappetence, fever, lameness, stiffness, hunched posture, salivation, and/or vomiting. Bloodwork will reveal very high creatine kinase levels (+/- high liver values); a muscle biopsy is then required for definitive diagnosis. Polymyositis can be inherited or caused by infections, autoimmune diseases, and/or toxins, and may be misdiagnosed as tick-borne disease or Myasthenia Gravis. If diagnosed early, available treatments are immunosuppressants and steroids. Intensive research is currently underway in the Netherlands - please contact the above Committees if you have a suspected sufferer.
- **Epilepsy** – rare in the breed with 1 – 5 dogs worldwide reporting epilepsy annually. No genetic or screening test available; cases should be reported.
- **Kidney diseases** – at this time poorly defined in the breed but appear to have some hereditary component. Breed clubs are monitoring developing cases of possibly immune-mediated glomerular disease and CKD.

Please reach out to the dog's breeder or the Committees with any questions about symptoms, treatment, or disease inheritance in this breed. We recognize most vets have not seen many Kooikers before, so we are here to help!