

Chinese Shar-Pei and the CHIC Program

Response to Reasons for NOT Doing Health Screening

“It costs too much to do the x-rays and blood work”

The Orthopedic Foundation for Animals website (www.offa.org) lists upcoming clinics which offer screening tests at greatly reduced rates. Some kennel clubs offer clinics in conjunction with their shows. Exhibitors can watch show premium lists to see which shows include reduced cost testing. There are other ways to reduce the fees associated with the CHIC program. Hip and elbow x-rays can be submitted at the same time to save fees. If the dog is cooperative, some clinicians are proficient at taking x-rays without anesthetic, at a lesser expense. Also, when submitting testing for multiple dogs, an OFA kennel discount is given. Owners might schedule several tests at one time to reduce office visit charges. Ask fellow breeders and owners where and when they do the testing on their breeding stock. You can find the best way to complete the tests economically.

“I have never had problems with elbows, why should I go looking for trouble?”

If breeders have submitted few or no elbow x-rays for evaluation, they really have no way of knowing whether their dogs have healthy elbows. Oftentimes, the lameness associated with elbow dysplasia does not become obvious until the dog is older. Chinese Shar-Pei are at risk for elbow dysplasia due to the high incidence (nearly 30%) found in the breed. As in hip dysplasia, the best way to avoid problems is to have positive screening results in parents, siblings and older relatives.

“My dog is too young for testing.”

Reputable breeders guarantee puppies to the best of their ability and find it necessary to screen dogs prior to breeding. Each breeder makes the decisions they believe to be best and should keep in mind that screening improves the chances the breeder produces a healthy dog, and the buyer purchases a healthy dog. The five Chinese Shar-Pei CHIC screening tests have different age requirements. All of the test can be performed, at least on a preliminary basis, at one year of age.

“I know my dogs have no thyroid problems because they have gorgeous coats.”

The only way to really know the thyroid status of a particular individual is to do thyroid blood testing. Many times the testing indicates hypothyroidism (low thyroid function) before clinical signs become apparent. By initiating therapy early, overt clinical signs can be avoided. The thyroid testing offered by the Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health at Michigan State University has several advantages:

1. The results can be interpreted by a veterinary endocrinologist.
2. The thyroid panel includes thyroid hormone autoantibody evaluation. These autoantibodies are markers for autoimmune thyroiditis and may serve as markers for immune system function in general.
3. This laboratory has the advantage of screening large numbers of canine blood samples from which they can monitor disease trends, breed incidences, etc.

Currently, the Chinese Shar-Pei is not on the list of dog breeds reported to have an increased prevalence of thyroid hormone autoantibodies (Nachreiner RF, et al: Prevalence of serum thyroid hormone autoantibodies in dogs with clinical signs of hypothyroidism. JAVMA 220:446 2002).

“All Shar-Pei have entropion, why should I bother with a CERF exam?”

Based on the current Health Survey results entropion causes problems in 35% of Chinese Shar-Pei. Aside from entropion, the CERF exam screens for several other eye disorders that are seen in Chinese Shar-Pei. These include conditions such as cataracts, lens luxation resulting in glaucoma and progressive retinal atrophy. Anyone who has owned a dog with a serious eye disease can tell you the heart ache and expense associated with these disorders.

A CERF exam may catch an eye disease while it is treatable, or can give owners a clean bill of health regarding their pet's vision. Some

diseases such as lens luxation, which can result in glaucoma, are known to be inherited and should be avoided by responsible breeders.

“I tested the grandparents and they were fine, so I know my lines are clear.”

While a history of clear tests may increase your chances of positive results, they do not guarantee that any offspring or future generations will be clear. To maintain progress in a breeding program, each generation should be screened. One missed problem could undo generations of hard work!

“No one else is doing all the tests, why should I?”

A CHIC certified dog is one that any breeder should be proud to call their own. This is a lofty standard, and demonstrates a substantial commitment to Chinese Shar-Pei. As more CHIC dogs are certified, it is hoped that this will become the standard for the breed. The main beneficiary of participation in the CHIC program is Chinese Shar-Pei. Clearly our breed improves in health as more and more breeders choose to screen their breeding stock against inherited diseases.

“I do not want to subject my dogs to unnecessary anesthesia.”

Many veterinarians are willing to x-ray a dog’s hips and elbows without anesthesia if the dog is cooperative. Other clinicians feel that better and more dependable results are obtained through the use of anesthesia. It is appropriate to discuss your concerns with your veterinarian. There is usually no need for general anesthesia when doing the CERF, patellar or thyroid screening tests.

“I don’t show my dogs. I am just a hobby breeder.”

Any dog that is bred should be screened for known hereditary disorders. All puppies – whether produced by a show home or a pet home – deserves the best chance at a healthy life! At this time, the best way to improve the odds of healthy puppies is to screen all breeding stock for inherited diseases where testing is possible. “The breeder told me my dog was free from these problems”
All buyers are encouraged to take new puppies to

a veterinarian for a preliminary health screening. However, prior to making any decisions regarding whether or not a dog should be bred, health certifications should be completed. In most cases, clearances cannot be given until the dogs have reached maturity.

“I trust my own veterinarian to read my test results.”

An individual practicing veterinarian can’t come close to evaluating the number of cases seen by OFA, Michigan State University and CERF. It is vital to understand breed variations and normals, and the breed incidence of various conditions. By evaluating large numbers of dogs the differences between breeds can be seen and understood. It is also important for the evaluation of screening tests to be standardized and to be interpreted the same way every time. Personal bias on the part of the veterinarian is also eliminated by having an impartial, expert opinion.

The Canine Health Information Center (CHIC) is a database of consolidated health test results from multiple sources. It is jointly sponsored by OFA and the AKC Canine Health Foundation. Parent Clubs determine a breed’s specific requirements. Dogs meeting all the health screening requirements are issued CHIC numbers.” (OFA E News, November/December 2006, 1:2)

Please see the previous issue of this magazine for article giving an overview of the CHIC program. “Health Screening and Chinese Shar-Pei, What Every Chinese Shar-Pei Owner Should Know About the CHIC Program.”

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