

# Health Page

In general the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever is not troubled too often by serious health problems however it is important to be aware of likely problems and to use common sense when breeding or looking for a new puppy and ask the right questions.

As with any breed of dog, there are a few hereditary health conditions to be aware of.

## **PRA - Progressive Retinal Atrophy**

PRA (Progressive Retinal Atrophy) is an inherited eye disease affecting the cells in the back of the retina, causing them to degenerate and die. This starts with night blindness and gradually deteriorates to total blindness.

Unfortunately, at this current time there is no treatment or cure for PRA.

Onset of PRA may start as early as 3 years old or as late as 12 years of age so onset of this disease might develop at different ages.

Because PRA is an inherited disease, it means that the gene must be inherited from a parent in order to continue this disease. Parents are either clear, a carrier or actually affected.

## **BVA/KC/ISDS Eye Scheme**

Onset of PRA is identifiable by regular eye screening under the BVA/KC/ISDS Eye Scheme.

However this annual eye test will only tell you if the dog is suffering from PRA at the time of the eye examination and not whether the dog is a carrier or affected with PRA.

It is however important for breeders to continue with their annual eye examination as this will also pick up other forms of eye diseases.

## **Collie Eye Anomaly/Choroidal Hypoplasia**

Collie Eye Anomaly (CEA) is an inherited disease which affects the deep structures of the eye. The main change which is present in all

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dogs with CEA is choroidal hypoplasia (CH), a pale patch in the back of the eye. This can be identified by ophthalmic examination.

The mode of inheritance follows the same pattern as that for prcd-PRA and can be tested for at the same time as the prcd-PRA DNA test is done

## The Optigen Prcd-PRA and CEA Tests

The OptiGen prcd-PRA test is a DNA-based test that helps breeders avoid one form of Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA) and Collie Eye Anomaly (CEA).

In both diseases a dog will fall under one of three categories. Clear, Carrier or Affected.

The following table indicates how breeding with carrier or affected dogs can influence the offspring's PRA or CEA status.

Parent 1	Parent 2		
	Clear	Carrier	Affected
Clear	All Pups will be clear	1/2 = Clear 1/2 = Carrier	All pups will be carriers
Carrier	1/2 = Clear 1/2 = Carrier	1/4 = Normal/Clear 1/2 = Carrier <b>1/4 = Affected</b>	1/2 = Carrier <b>1/2 = Affected</b>
Affected	All pups will be carriers	1/2 = Carrier <b>1/2 = Affected</b>	<b>All pups will be affected</b>

The club recommends that all breeders should obtain an Optigen Prcd-PRA and CEA eye test for their breeding stock and avoid using affected dogs to eliminate afflicted animals from the gene pool. It is also recommended that carrier dogs are only mated with clears for the same reason.

The club also recommends that potential puppy owners ask to see copies of the Optigen eye test results for both Sire and Dam.

Remember that the BVA/KC/ISDS eye scheme test results are relevant but may not tell you if your puppy will be clear, a carrier or affected.

Since late 2007, with owners permissions, Optigen testing results are being held by the Kennel Club and can be viewed at this link..

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Kennel Club Optigen Records -

<http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/item/1494>

You can also find specific details on the DNA testing provided by Optigen via this link to the Optigen website.

<http://www.optigen.com/>

## Hip Dysplasia

Hip Dysplasia, a condition affecting the hip joint, can eventually cause lameness and painful arthritis of the joints. Whilst this is generally associated with larger breeds of dog, it can be found in any breed.

All dogs used for breeding should be hip scored. The minimum hip score is 0 and the maximum is 106 (53 for each hip). The lower the score the less the degree of hip dysplasia is present. An average (or mean) score for the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever is 12 .

At present, the incidence of HD in the breed does not appear to be a problem, however the club recommends that all breeders use only breeding stock that score below the mean score of 12. Potential puppy owners should always ask to see copies of the hip scores for both parents.

More information on the Kennel Club/BVA Hip Scoring scheme can be found at

[http://www.bva.co.uk/canine\\_health\\_schemes/Hip\\_Scheme.aspx](http://www.bva.co.uk/canine_health_schemes/Hip_Scheme.aspx)

## Elbow Dysplasia

Elbow Dysplasia (ED) means the abnormal development of the dog's elbow. It can cause pain and lameness which may suddenly appear or can remain silent for months even years and then appear slowly. Eventually, possibly, causing osteoarthritis.

At this time, although it is not considered as a major problem within the breed, it is now recommended that elbows are scored in any Toller that is going to be bred from.

Elbows are each scored on a scale of 0 to 3 (0 being the best), the highest score is taken as the grade for that dog.

Advice to breeders is that only dogs with a score of 0 or 1 should be used for breeding wherever possible.

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More information on the Kennel Club/bva Elbow Scheme can be found at <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/item/309>

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## Other Health Issues

### **SRMA – Steroid Responsive Meningitis – Arteritis**

This is a condition that primarily involves a dog's central nervous system. The central nervous system consists of brain and spinal cord. Meningitis is an inflammation of the covering layer of the central nervous system. The condition affects the arteries in many body system tissues as well.

Little is known about why some dogs get SRMA and others do not, whether it is a hereditary condition or whether it is caused by environmental factors or a mixture of both.

However, in recent years, cases of SRMA would appear to have increased in Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retrievers and whilst inheritance of this condition cannot be ruled out the club recommends that breeders do not breed from a bitch or a dog that has previously had this condition.

### **Symptoms**

The problem usually develops in pups and young adults up to 2 years of age.

Common symptoms can include any (but not always all) of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Stiff neck
- Hyper sensitivity to touch
- Reduced mobility due to stiffness
- Lack of appetite
- Lethargy
- High Temperature
- Trembling and Muscle Spasms

Symptoms may also vary in how acute they are.

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## Treatments

The diagnosis of this condition can be a challenge to any vet, this is largely due to the fact that many vets have never come across SRMA.

This prognosis for this condition is good providing early treatment with steroids is undertaken. So it is vitally important that if you suspect that your Toller has this please mention this condition to the vet.

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## Health General

Always know your vet number, store it in your mobile phone and keep it handy.

If your regular vet doesn't have a 24-hour emergency service, know which nearby vet you would use. Keep the phone number handy.

We encourage all owners to report health problems to their breeder and to stay in contact with their breeder.

Always take your dog to a vet the minute you think there is a problem.

If you have any questions regarding health issues or would like to discuss breeding strategies, please contact our health coordinator:-

Helen Withey KCAI MBIPDT Adv - [helen.withey@thetollerclub.org.uk](mailto:helen.withey@thetollerclub.org.uk)

Further health conditions and information can also be found on the Toller Health Coalition on:

<http://www.toller.ca/tollerhealth/healthconditions.html>.

It should be noted however, that some of the conditions mentioned are more common in other Countries and have not become, as yet, a problem within the UK.

All information contained within this page is correct at the time of publication.