



Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier Club of GB

Health Notice Board

This information is provided to give you some general advice if you are at all concerned about the well-being of your Wheaten. All information provided is current at the time of publication.

The Wheaten is generally a very healthy dog with very few hereditary health problems. However, from time-to-time concerns may arise.

Our Health Notice Board is divided into two sections:

- General canine issues
- Health problems that Wheatens are known to have world wide. Again, we would emphasise that the incidence of such problems in the UK is rare.

If you have any concerns about your Wheaten, please contact your breeder, a member of the Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier Club of GB Committee, or one of our health team. They will be able to give you further general advice and contacts for the Club's various veterinary specialists.

General Canine Health Issues

Addison's Disease

This condition can occur in many breeds, but it is uncommon in all of them. It is a disease that can be difficult to diagnose as the symptoms come and go and are similar to several other canine problems. An article written by Helen Larson and published in the American Wheaten Club magazine *Benchmarks* is available on request or access <http://www.scwtca.org/health/articles/addisons.htm>.

Adverse reactions to animal medicines - including microchip movement

The Suspected Adverse Reaction Surveillance Scheme (SARSS) of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate monitors suspected adverse reactions to animal medicines. They are also concerned with adverse effects on humans or other animals exposed to such a medicine or to any residues of a medicine present in the environment. The information derived from this pharmacovigilance adds to the knowledge about possible negative effects of drugs in animals.

The yellow form for reporting any suspected adverse reaction that your pet has had can now be downloaded and sent in by the general public, not just by a vet. You can find this online at www.vmd.defra.gov.uk under 'Report an Adverse Event'. These are also available free from Veterinary Medicines Directorate, FREEPOST KT4503, Woodham Lane, New Haw, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 3BR (tel 01932-338427) or e-mail sarss@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk

To report that your dog's microchip has moved click on www.vmd.defra.gov.uk, and choose "Report an adverse event" from the list at the top right. The section on Microchips is at the top of the page. You will need the dog's microchip number, chip manufacturer, date & area of implantation, implanter details, dog details (birth date, weight, etc), when movement was discovered and by whom plus their details, & where the chip has moved to. Reporting chip movement is now required by law.

The National Office of Animal Health (NOAH) represents the UK animal medicines industry promoting the benefits of safe and effective quality medicines for the health & welfare of all animals. NOAH's website, www.noah.co.uk, has a brief explanation on pharmacovigilance, under the 'medicines topics' section.

Aggression

Aggression can be a serious problem and no dog should be aggressive towards humans. If your dog shows aggressive tendencies, no matter at what age, then this will need immediate remedial action. The situation may require individual attention. Please speak to a committee member, or your breeder, for further advice. A list of professional behaviourists and trainers, as well as various leaflets, is available from the Club Secretary.

Canine Degenerative Myelopathy

There is now a DNA test available from Laboklin to identify this distressing disease. If this might be a concern for your dog, your vet can find information at U. Missouri website:

<http://www.caninegeneticdiseases.net/DM/ancmntDM.htm>

Although there is no treatment for CDM, a negative DNA result would eliminate this as a cause of back legs problems. Other causes can often be treated.

Ectopic ureters

This is a congenital condition mainly affecting bitches. The result is urinary incontinence (unconscious lack of control over urination) which should be investigated. It should not be confused with incontinence due to old age, or after spaying which may affect bladder control. Please advise the Club if your Wheaten has been diagnosed as having an ectopic ureter.

Eating glass or sharp bits of plastic

If your dog has swallowed glass from a broken Christmas tree ornament or other source, or chewed up and swallowed shards from a plastic object, protect his insides in the following way:

- Tear off some pieces of cotton wool (it MUST be pure cotton, not a synthetic substitute). A dog under 10 lbs. should have the equivalent of two walnut-sized pieces of cotton torn into small bits. Dogs of 10 to 50 lbs need correspondingly more.
- Dip the cotton pieces into melting ice cream, custard, yoghurt or softened tinned dog food, etc. and feed them to the dog.

Dogs seem to like these strange treats and eat them readily. As the cotton works its way through the digestive tract, the fibres will wrap themselves around all the sharp pieces, protecting the intestines from damage. Your dog's motions will appear strange for a few days and you should check for fresh blood or a tarry appearance to the stool. If either appears, an immediate visit to the vet is needed. In most cases the dog will be just fine.

Epilepsy

Very few Wheatens have been reported with this problem. However, for further information try searching the web for 'epilepsy in dogs' or contact the Phyllis Croft Foundation for Canine Epilepsy (PCFCE) or the Canine Epilepsy Support Group. Both are reported to be helpful.

Heat Exhaustion:

Initial symptoms are heavy panting and rapid breathing, excessive drooling, bright red gums and tongue, uncoordinated movement and disorientation. If your dog shows any of these signs, it is important to cool him down immediately.

Move him to a cool, shaded area and pour **cool** water over his body, including the belly area. NEVER use cold water as this can cause your dog to go into shock. You can also wet a towel and lie him on it, using another wet towel over his body.

Encourage him to drink small amounts of cool water or lick some ice cubes, too much water, too quickly could make him vomit exacerbating his dehydration. An electrolyte solution is even better – make your own by adding a dessert spoon of honey and a pinch of salt in a pint of water. Surgical spirit rubbed on his pads will also help.

His temperature should begin to stabilise to between 38° - 39°C (100° - 102°F). Continue to use cool water over his body until his breathing returns to a more normal rate and then take him to the vet as a matter of urgency.

Advanced signs of heatstroke include white/blue gums, lethargy, reluctance to move, noisy breathing, involuntary toileting and collapse – an immediate trip to the vet is needed.

Hip dysplasia

It is advised that all dogs used in breeding programmes are hip scored. Should your Wheaten require an anaesthetic for any reason, even if you have no intention of breeding, the information gathered by having the hips scored after one year of age, would help to build up a more accurate picture of the breed. This is usually done under anaesthesia although some vets/technicians will do this under sedation.

You must take your Wheaten's Kennel Club registration certificate and microchip details with you at the time of the x-ray. The dog's registration number goes onto the plate in order to identify each individual dog and the other details go with the plate for assessment by the BVA/KC panel. The Breed mean score over the past 15 years is 11.4.

Microchipping

All dogs are now required by law to be microchipped from the age of 8 weeks. If a chip moves from the spot where it was inserted this constitutes an "adverse reaction event" which must, by law, be reported to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. See "Adverse reactions" section, 3rd paragraph.

Vaccination

Vaccination will protect your Wheaten against the main canine diseases. If your Wheaten should suffer an adverse reaction within a three-month period following any vaccination, this should be reported. There is a special yellow Adverse Reaction form for this, available from your vet, NOAH (see Adverse Reactions, second section or the Veterinary Medicine Directorate (VMD).

Puppy vaccination is sometimes started by the breeder. Check with your breeder before collecting your puppy to find out which brand of vaccine was used. You can then check that your vet is able to administer a compatible vaccine.

Re-vaccination/boosters:

Many vets will contact you each year to remind you to have your dog's booster injection but the current advice in World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) global guidelines on vaccination, which can be found on the link below, states that most dogs do not need an annual booster for at least, and possibly more than every three years. <https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/WSAVA-Vaccination-Guidelines-2015.pdf>

Wheaten Specific Health Issues

DNA Storage

Following the closure of the Animal Health Trust in 2020, all Wheaten DNA previously stored at the AHT facility, was moved to Cambridge University and their storage facilities. Discussions are currently ongoing as to whether or not Cambridge University will be able to process and store new DNA samples going forward. We expect a decision on this soon and will update progress on this in due course.

Eye Testing

Retinal Folds

To date these small 'folds' found on the retina do not affect the eyesight of the dog. However, we are advised that those identified as having folds should not be bred from, as this could eventually lead to more serious problems, such as detached retinas, as has happened in some other breeds. It is recommended that breeders screen puppies, preferably at 6 to 8 weeks of age. After that age the folds can 'iron out' and may not be detected. Any pup found to have folds should be sold to a pet home and its Kennel Club Registration endorsed so that it is not used for breeding.

Persistent Pupillary Membranes (PPMs) and Hyaloid Tags

Following recent changes in the British Veterinary Association's Eye Testing Certification, the conditions referred to as PPMs & Hyaloid Tags will now be included.

During development of the eye in the embryo, the iris initially forms as a solid sheet of mesodermal tissue known as the pupillary membrane. Later on, some of the mesodermal tissue dissipates and this results in the formation of the pupil. Sometimes after birth and up to 6-8 weeks of age, a few of these fine strands of pupillary membrane remain. However, if these persist after this age they are described as PPMs.

The hyaloid tag is a similar embryonic structure comprising remnants of the blood vessels involved in the development of the lens. This has no effect on vision and also gradually disappears as the puppy matures.

We are advised that these conditions in Wheatens do not affect the eyesight and appear to be insignificant. We will continue to monitor the situation. Eye testing clinics are regularly advertised in the Dog Press. A full list of eye specialists is available from the Club Secretary or the British Veterinary Association (0207-636-6541). If, as a breeder, you are having problems booking an eye testing for your litter, contact the BVA.

Hearing Testing

Deafness was identified in a very small number of Wheatens in 1992/1996. Since this time no new cases have been reported. One particular dog appears to be a common ancestor. If you have concerns about your dog's hearing contact the Club's Secretary or Health Team Leader for details of testers

PLE/PLN

Any cases, or suspected cases, of **Protein Losing Enteropathy** or **Protein Losing Nephropathy** should be reported to the Club so that a watch can be kept on this, as with any other potential health problem. The situation is being monitored and a list of those Wheatens clinically proven to be, clinically shown as or suspected to be, losing protein by a specialist veterinary advisor, is published regularly in the Club *Bulletin*, the Club *Year Book* and on the Club *website*.

For those concerned about PLE and/or PLN and the testing procedures involved, information is included on the WHI's website www.wheatenhealthinitiative.com and also on the SCWTC of America's web site, www.scwtca.org.

Our Club has three papers giving information about PLN – a general article of basic information, a paper designed for those with a dog newly diagnosed with PLN or which has 2 copies of the predisposing gene and a companion article for their vet. There is also information on testing and on inheritance. All are available from the Club's Health Team and on the Club website.

Our Club has a set of individually lettered forms from Laboklin Laboratories for PLN testing. These are available from the Health team along with swabs and instructions. Only a small number of Wheatens in the UK have been confirmed as losing protein by our veterinary specialists, in comparison to the population of Wheatens in the UK. However, using these special forms will allow us to monitor the prevalence of this gene in our Wheatens.

Renal Dysplasia

RD is a breed specific kidney disease. The SCWTC of GB recommends that all breeding stock, both dam and sire, should be tested for normal kidney function prior to mating. Kidney function testing of litters of puppies should be undertaken before they go to their new homes. Dysfunction of the kidney should be detectable by 7 weeks of age and would indicate possible malformation of the kidneys. Urine tests for a litter of puppies takes some organisation on the part of the breeder but is not impossible and is a more accurate test.

Some breeders are now having their litters examined by ultrasound to check for normal kidneys.

The blood and urine tests can be carried out by your own vet. Blood sampling should be done at least 8 hours after feeding (puppies at least 4 hours). Water must be available during this time to avoid dehydration as this will affect sample results. If there is any doubt regarding kidney function, your vet should consult the Club's veterinary advisor.

A comprehensive booklet explaining RD is available from the Club. This is issued to all new members and included in the Puppy Handbook. If you plan to have your Wheaten's blood/urine tested, show the booklet to your vet so that he/she is aware of the history of the problem in the breed and what samples are required. Only a very small number of cases of RD have been confirmed in the UK in recent years.

Post Mortem

Losing any animal is always extremely distressing and if there does not appear to be a straightforward reason for the death of your pet, please consider having a post mortem carried out for the sake of ongoing health investigations.

Instructions for any dog dying with a problem, whether kidney or PLE/PLN, can be relayed to your vet by the Club Secretary or the Health Team Leader. Please remember that a diagnosis of RD, PLE and PLN can **only be confirmed** by a post mortem examination and provides essential knowledge for future breed health. (An RD diagnosis can also be made on a living dog using a wedge biopsy procedure.)

The Club health fund will assist with the costs of a post-mortem where RD, PLE/PLN is suspected.

Club Advisors

For any health problems for which your veterinary surgeon would like further information, we have two advisors:

Prof. Joanna Dukes McEwan,
Small Animal Teaching Hospital, University of Liverpool,
Leahurst, Chester High Road, Tel: 0151-795-6100
Neston, Wirral, FAX: 0151-795-6101
Merseyside CH64 7TE e-mail: j.Dukes-Mcewan@liverpool.ac.uk

For RD, PLE and PLN: *ask your vet to contact...*

Dr. Julien Bazelle DVM MRCVS DipECVIM-CA
Davies Veterinary Specialists
Manor Farm Business Park, Tel: 01582-883950
Higham Gobion, Hitchin, e-mail: Julien.Bazelle@vetspecialists.co.uk
Herts. SG5 3HR

Club services

Health Fund

There are funds available in some cases through the SCWT Club Health Fund to assist with the payment of veterinary fees for sampling and post mortem examination, as well as laboratory testing of samples from suspected affected animals. This is particularly relevant to any inheritable problem for the breed.

Leaflets

The following leaflets are available from the Health Team at health@wheaten.org.uk

- Health Booklet for Soft-Coated Wheaten Terriers
- Health testing recommended for Wheatens before breeding
- Health testing recommended for puppies
- “Guidelines for Breeding” (relevant for Stud Dog and Bitch owners)
- “Renal Dysplasia (RD) in Soft-Coated Wheaten Terriers. An advisory booklet for all Wheaten Owners”

For PLN:

- “Protein Losing Nephropathy” A basic paper explaining the disease
- “Protein Losing Nephropathy & your Wheaten”: an article for those whose Wheaten has been diagnosed with PLN or whose dog is at a higher risk of developing the disease.
- “Protein Losing Nephropathy & your Wheaten. *A letter for your veterinarian*”.
- “Inheritance of the predisposing gene for PLN”
- “Testing information for the predisposing gene for protein losing nephropathy (PLN) at the two laboratories”

Rehoming

The Club will also undertake to rehome Wheatens should anything happen to the owner. A provision in a will would alert Executors to this. This service also applies for owners whose circumstances have changed such that it is impossible for them to keep their dog. The Committee Member responsible for rehoming is listed on the ‘Committee Duties’ page on the website.

Club health records

Records of the various testing schemes are kept by the SCWTC of GB. The Committee would be grateful to receive photocopies of all health test results for the breed Health files. These can be sent to the Secretary at secretary@wheaten.org.uk , or to the Health Team at health@wheaten.org.uk .

Web sites for further health information

www.wheaten.org.uk and click on wheaten health
www.wheatenhealthinitiative.com
www.scwtca.org/health