

Hip Scoring

There is a lot of chat about hip scoring in dogs and why it is important and necessary, this short document offers brief information about it.

What is hip dysplasia?

Hip dysplasia is a common inherited problem where abnormalities occur in the hip joints. These changes to the hip joint will begin at a young age as the puppy starts to become more active and will get worse over time. The changes can lead to excessive wear and tear of the joint causing one or more hip joints to become defective. At this point, the hip joint may be painful and can have serious effects on the health, behaviour and welfare of the dog.

Is it all down to inheritance?

The short answer to that is no. It is a mix of hereditary and environmental factors both of which are important. What is meant by environmental factors is what happens to the pup from the time it becomes active until such time as it becomes mature. Wear and tear on the joint results in varying amounts of inflammation and degeneration. Because of the rapid growth of puppies the following are important:

- the right nutrition for skeletal growth to be available at the right time and in the right proportions
- the type and intensity of exercise is vital
- Body weight i.e. not letting your pup become overweight
- accidents.

What are the signs of hip dysplasia?

The symptoms will vary from dog to dog but some visible signs include

- Lameness
- Stiffness after rest
- A reluctance to exercise
- Groaning while resting or getting up
- Difficulty using the stairs

Your vet will be able to provide a reliable assessment of whether hip dysplasia is present and an X-ray is the only definitive way of diagnosing hip dysplasia.

However, it is worth noting that even if a dog has hip dysplasia it may not show symptoms.

Can Hip Dysplasia be treated?

There are various ways of easing the pain and limitation of movement for example, applied heat, massage, physiotherapy, good bedding, appropriate exercise and weight management as well as pain medication. In severe cases, surgical procedures may be considered.

What is the BVA scheme?

The BVA hip dysplasia scheme uses X-rays to identify abnormal growth/changes in the hip joint. The images are then reviewed and scored by an expert panel of veterinary surgeons. The hip scores resulting should then be compared to the Breed Specific Statistics to ensure that only healthy dogs are bred from.

How do I screen my dog for Hip Dysplasia?

1. Contact your vet to arrange for your dog to be x-rayed as part of the hip dysplasia scheme.
2. Your vet will then submit the X-rays and relevant information to the BVA for assessment.
3. The expert panel of veterinary surgeons appointed by the BVA will then score the X-rays. There is a scoring session each week.
4. The results are returned to your vet and passed to yourself in the form of a certificate providing the details of the score.
5. If your dog is registered with the UK Kennel Club, the results will also be published on the Kennel Club website.

What is scoring?

The hip score is made up of a number of points given for features in the hip joint. The score is representative of how severe the condition is. The lower the score the better. The minimum score for each hip is 0. The maximum score for each hip is 53. This gives a range of 0-106. The total score for both hips should be compared to the breed median and the BVA recommends only breeding from dogs with hip scores under the breed median.

What is the Breed Median?

The BVA creates statistics including the breed median for each UK Kennel Club breed of dog that goes through the hip dysplasia scheme, as well as the most common crossbreeds and unrecognised breeds which go through the scheme.

The median is calculated from all the scores recorded for that breed over the previous 5 years. It represents the middle score for all dogs in that breed. This means that half the dogs through the scheme will have scored lower than the median and half will have scored higher than the median.

How much does it cost to get my dog hip scored?

A single submission to the hip scheme starts from £70 for the BVA fee but you must also add on the cost your vets will charge for taking the X-rays, which will vary from vet to vet.

What should I look for when I am buying a puppy?

It is important that you see both parents' results for hip dysplasia before you commit to buying. The certificates for the hip scores should also be included in the puppy information provided to you by your breeder, along with feeding and exercise advice. If the breeder is unable to produce them, test results of all KC registered pedigree dogs can be found here:-

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/search/health-test-results-finder/>

You will need the pedigree names of the parents.

The BVA recommends that the scores for both parents should be below the breed median which in samoyeds which in 2019 was a total of 10 for both hips.

If I buy a puppy whose parents which both have good hip scores am I guaranteed that my puppy will be OK?

Buying a puppy whose parents have good hip scores minimises the chances of your puppy developing hip dysplasia however, a substantial amount of any hip score is down to environmental factors.

What is meant by environmental factors is what happens to the pup from the time it becomes active until such time as the pup matures. Wear and tear on the joint results in varying amounts of inflammation and degeneration. Because of the rapid growth of puppies the following are important:

- the right nutrition for skeletal growth to be available at the right time and in the right proportions
- the type and intensity of exercise is vital
- Body weight i.e. not letting your pup become overweight.
- accidents.

This means that following your breeders guidance for diet and exercise is very important as it has life long effects on your puppy.

March 2021.