

**Ask Dr. OES**

**A Column from the Health and Research Committee**

**Send your questions to oeshealth@gmail.com.**

**Dear Dr. OES,**

**Why does my dad keep checking my thyroid all the time? I know, I know, he says it is only once a year, but I swear I’m full of holes from all the blood draws.**

**Holey in Jackson Hole, WY**

Dear Holey,

I also do not like needle sticks, but that is the only way to see if your thyroid is functioning normally. The thyroid hormones that should be checked are T4, TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone), and TgAA (thyroid autoantibodies). A positive TgAA often occurs before symptoms appear. Autoimmune hypothyroidism can occur at any time during a dog’s life.

This is why it is recommended that dogs be tested every year until 5 years of age and then every 2 years after age five.

Every cell in the body depends on the hormones produced by the thyroid to manage its metabolism. Hypothyroidism in the early stages may present with subtle clues such as fearfulness, nervousness, itching, inattentiveness, and seasonal allergies that often progress into behavioral issues (unprovoked aggression) before the typical clinical signs of hypothyroidism are seen.

In untreated hypothyroidism, clinical signs may include the following: 1) Metabolism is slower so weight gain, lethargy, and mental dullness can result; 2) Dermatologic problems develop such as dry skin, hair loss, and dull coat; 3) Neuromuscular problems such as drooping eyelids and weakness may occur; 4) Cardiac abnormalities and gastrointestinal disorders may be seen; 5) Seizures due to hypothyroidism are also common.

Another exam that your dad should be doing is an Eye Exam by a board certified ophthalmologist every year until 5 years of age (then every 2 years).

Test results should be sent to the OFA Database.

**Why should I register with OFA?**

The Orthopedic Foundation for Animals was established to have a central database to compile data in order to lower the incidence of inherited diseases in dogs and cats. OFA is a tool for breeders to use to improve the health of their dogs and ultimately preserve the breed. It is also a place for researchers to learn what diseases are present within each breed. The CHIC database is breed specific.

CHIC also offers a DNA repository so that diseases can be studied now and in the future. The goal of both OFA and CHIC is to reduce the occurrence of inheritable diseases. Contributing to these databases will help breeders produce healthier puppies.

Dr. OES

**Dear Dr. OES,**

**My heart is fine. It flutters a little when that sweet bitch down the street sashays by, but, I mean, whose wouldn’t?! She’s gorgeous! Anyway, I heard my mom on the phone say something about I need an ECG for my heart. What the heck?**

**Heartthrob in Lovely, LA**

Dear Heartthrob,

Your mom loves you and wants to provide you with the best medical care she can. When you go see the veterinary cardiologist, they will listen to your heart with a stethoscope (auscultation) to check for murmurs. An additional more in-depth test is echocardiogram (ECG) to visualize blood flow through Doppler technology. Neither test is painful.

Although a cardiac evaluation is not required to obtain a CHIC number, it is an optional test that is recommended yearly.

Dr. OES

More information on cardiac, eye, and thyroid tests and disease can be found under the “Diseases” tab on www.ofa.org.