**Dear Dr. OES,**

**Ask Dr. OES**

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

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

**I was at the dog park the other day and a pushy Pitty told me that my beautiful blue eyes mean I could have health problems as I get older. I have been told they are my best feature!**

**Am I going to go BLIND?!?**

**Victim of Dog Park Bullying in Bullhead, AZ**

Dear Victim,

A dog’s eye color is not necessarily a sign of a health problem. However, two blue eyes can sometimes be linked with other health issues.

Although having blue eyes is a recessive trait, it does not mean that blue-eyed dogs have more recessive traits than dark-eyed dogs. It just means that both parents have the gene for blue eyes.

Blue eyes occur due to a lack of pigmentation (melanin). The stroma in the blue eye consists of colorless collagen fibers. The particles within these fibers scatter light entering the eye, resulting in its blue color, much like the way the sky appears blue.

While the actual blue color is not a problem, if this lack of pigmentation is found elsewhere, such as the cochlea of the ear, health issues could arise. (In this case, deafness.)

The main eye problems in OES include cataracts, progressive retinal atrophy (PRA), entropion, and distichia, to name a few. Please note that none of these are associated with eye color.

Historically, dogs with one blue eye or a “wall eye” were preferred. Farmers believed that eyes of different colors resulted from a “wall” in between the halves of the brain. This “wall” allowed them to watch and work stock more effectively. Of course, we now know eye color does not affect the working ability of dogs.

Dr. OES

**Dear Dr. OES,**

**My daddy and I run every morning, but he won’t feed me before we go!**

**Once we are home, I have to wait so long for my breakfast that it turns into “brunch” (with no mimosas, either)!**

**Should I really be running on an empty stomach?**

**Feed Me in Seymour, IN**

Dear Feed Me,

Time is running out to complete the Health Survey!

[www.ofa.org/ about/educational-resources/health-surveys](http://www.ofa.org/%20about/educational-resources/health-surveys)

Dogs perform best on an empty stomach. An empty GI tract allows more blood, oxygen, and glucose to reach the muscles during exercise. Feeding small snacks every 1-2 hours during a performance event will help keep the dog’s energy level up.

Bloat (gastric dilatation-volvulus) normally occurs within 2 hours of eating. It is suggested that dogs do not exercise 1 hour before or 1 hour after feeding. This will allow the body to be in a resting state while eating and digesting.

Sorry, boy. Your daddy is doing everything right to keep you in great shape and out of the vet’s office!

Dr. OES

**Dear Dr. OES,**

**Is Cerebellar Ataxia the same as Cerebellar Degeneration? If so, why does OFA call it Cerebellar Ataxia now?**

**Confused in Wise, VA**

Dear Confused,

Correspondence with OFA confirms that they have always called it Cerebellar Degeneration (CD).

A different genetic disease on the OFA website that may have caused the confusion is Neonatal Cerebellar Ataxia, but this only occurs in Coton de Tulear and Havanese.

Many people and labs use the terms Cerebellar Degeneration, Cerebellar Ataxia, and Cerebellar Abiotrophy interchangeably to refer to the same inherited disease. More than likely, people say Degeneration and Ataxia because it’s easier to pronounce than Abiotrophy.

Cerebellar Degeneration is the deterioration of neurons in the cerebellum, the part of the brain that controls balance and coordination. CD may be inherited or result from a non-inherited condition.

Cerebellar Abiotrophy is an inherited degenerative cerebellar disease. Abiotrophy refers to spontaneous, premature neuron death, mainly occurring as a result of metabolism error.

Cerebellar Ataxia is a lack of muscle coordination caused by a dysfunction in the cerebellum.

Basically, Cerebellar Ataxia is the symptom. The specific inherited disease is Cerebellar Abiotrophy, which is a type of Cerebellar Degeneration.

Other confusing terms are Cerebral and Cerebellar. Cerebral means relating to the cerebrum, the largest part of the brain, divided into two halves.

Cerebellar means pertaining to the cerebellum, the part of the brain located at the base of the skull.

Dr. OES