



Facts about Hip Dysplasia by Samuel L Harkey, DVM

For years this word has been passed around as something that is seen occasionally in large breed dogs, but what is hip dysplasia and what can be done to prevent it? **Hip dysplasia** is literally arthritis of the hip joints. Hip dysplasia is considered to be an inherited disease since hip conformation is passed down from the dam and sire to the puppies. The hip joint is a ball and socket joint, so the more of the ball that is covered by the socket, the less likely the dog is to develop hip dysplasia. Evaluation of hip joint conformation is very difficult to diagnose without x-rays. Manual palpation of the hip joint can be done but many poorly conformed hip joints may feel "tight" at 8-12 weeks of age. There have been many discussions about the Hereditary aspect of hip dysplasia and if any other factors such as body condition, can affect the dog.

Common breeds affected with hip dysplasia:

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| 1) English Bulldog | 74% bad |
| 2) Pug | 63% bad |
| 3) Dogue de Bordeaux | 56% bad |
| 4) Neopolitan Mastiff | 49% bad |
| 5) St. Bernard | 47% bad |
| 6) Cane Corso | 40% bad |
| 7) Basset | 36% bad |
| 8) French Bulldog | 34% bad |
| 9) American Bulldog | 33% bad |
| 10) Newfoundland | 26% bad |

Purina Foods did a study with a litter of Labradors in which they split up a litter of puppies and kept ½ the litter in an obese condition (>5 body condition score) and the other ½ of the litter in good lean body condition (<5 body condition score). This study showed that by keeping the dogs in a lean body condition, that it lessened or prevented the development of osteo-arthritis (hip dysplasia). This same result has been proven in several published articles in the *Journal of Veterinary Medicine*. It is very important to understand that the dogs kept in "lean" body condition are not kept "skinny". These dogs were just kept in the appropriate healthy body condition in which the ribs can easily be palpated (not seen!). This study is also not saying that hip dysplasia is strictly caused by obesity, hip dysplasia is primarily a hereditary disease. So what can be done about preventing the hereditary part of hip dysplasia?

The **Orthopedic Foundation for Animals** is a non-profit organization of board certified radiologists located in **Columbia, Missouri** that will evaluate x-rays of the hip joints that are taken at your local veterinarian and give you either certification that the hips joints are excellent, good, fair, or dysplastic (hip dysplasia). It is recommended to not breed dogs with dysplastic hips. By having your dogs hips evaluated you can significantly decrease your rejects and claims for hip related problems. **OFA** offers certification of hips beginning at 24 months of age. They also offer preliminary x-rays at a very young age which can be very valuable when choosing breeding stock.

Many of the puppy distributors will pay a bonus or premium for puppies that have come from an **OFA** certified sire or dam. Breeders selling their pets out the door or direct to the pet stores can also benefit from this value by having less claims on their puppies and by greater profit margins when the **OFA** certification is properly marketed. I recommend evaluating your male dogs first to maximize the amount of pups from a certified parent. Once your males are done and you are familiar with the process of **OFA**, it is very advisable to certify your females as well.

Taking the x-ray of the animal is a very simple procedure that does involve giving the dog a sedative then taking the x-ray. The entire process only takes appx. 15 minutes. The results typically take 8-12 weeks to get back. Cost of evaluation by **OFA** is \$35 per evaluation or \$15 per evaluation if you send in 5 or more at the same time. Pricing for the procedure (anesthesia/x-ray) will differ among vets, but we offer the procedure for \$60.00 per animal.

If you have any questions please contact: **Dr. Samuel L. Harkey (417) 442-PETS (7387)**
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