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West Highland White Terrier Club of America Health Statement

Recommended Health Screening of Westies and the Importance of the CHIC Health Registry

Breeding healthy dogs requires a thorough commitment to sound breeding practices and an understanding of several sets of complex information:

- Breed standard and type
- Pedigrees and potential breeding partners
- Health problems that affect the breed and the particular breeding partners

This can only happen if breeders test their dogs and register the results to enable the best possible choices for current breeding programs. Since breeders often study many generations of a pedigree, registration now will be very useful in the future as more research provides answers to currently frustrating health issues.

The Westie Foundation of America and the West Highland White Terrier Club of America have agreed on a baseline of useful tests for our Westies that will help to improve health. We endorse CHIC, the [Canine Health Information Center](#), as the preferred centralized canine health database. This registry is jointly sponsored by the [AKC Canine Health Foundation](#) (CHF) and the [Orthopedic Foundation for Animals](#) (OFA). CHIC also maintains a DNA bank that will facilitate future research and testing aimed at reducing the incidence of inherited disease in our Westies.

A CHIC number and report are issued once a dog's breed specific test results are entered into the database. Owner approval is required for results to be published. However, CHIC encourages sharing all results, whether normal or abnormal. **All dogs must have permanent identification (microchip or tattoo) for entry into the database**

The breed specific requirements for West Highland White Terriers include the results of four screenings:

- **Hip X-ray:** A hip X-ray is used to determine the absence or presence of hip dysplasia and Legg-Calve Perthes. The hip X-ray can be done at your vet's office or at an OFA clinic sponsored by a kennel club. Dogs should be at least two years of age before screened and short acting anesthesia is recommended to ensure accuracy of the X-ray. Bitches immediately coming into or going out of season should not submit hip X-rays since hormonal influences could alter results. Waiting at least 2 months after a bitch comes out of season is recommended. The vet who performs the X-ray fills out an official OFA form and sends the digital X-rays with an accompanying fee to the OFA.

**Results from the OFA database indicate that 12% of westies have abnormal ratings for hips.*

- **Patellar Screening:** Your vet can evaluate the patellas or knee caps of your dog and determine if there is any evidence of luxation. This does not require an X-ray. Dogs should be at least one year of age before being evaluated. The vet fills out an official OFA form and the owner submits the form with accompanying fee to the OFA.
- **Eye Certification Exam:** This exam is used to diagnose eye diseases and must be done by a certified ophthalmologist who has the necessary forms that need to be submitted to CHIC along with an accompanying fee. It is recommended that eye exams be done yearly. The dog's eyes need to be dilated twenty minutes before the exam. The effects of the dilation subside within two hours and during this time period the dog should not be exposed to bright sunlight. The registry is maintained by [CHIC](#) and OFA. Many dog shows have eye clinics.

At the eye clinic held during the Centennial week (2009), 10.817% of the 66 Westies tested were identified with eye abnormalities.

- **Craniomandibular Osteopathy:** There is also a genetic test now available for Craniomandibular Osteopathy (CMO or "lion jaw). CMO has been a very tough disease to avoid and after over 30 years of study, testing is now available. With careful breeding of all CMO tested breeding stock, this disease may be eradicated.

Forms Required: Application forms for each screening must be submitted for entry into the database. The forms can be downloaded from the OFA website [WEST-HIGHLAND-WHITE-TERRIER \(ofa.org\)](http://WEST-HIGHLAND-WHITE-TERRIER.ofa.org) and should be given to your vet when you have scheduled a hip X-ray or patellar screening. For CMO, submit the DNA Based Genetic Disease form and submit with your test results. A board-certified ophthalmologist will provide the necessary OFA Eye Certification form upon completion of an eye exam.

Thank you,
Ken Fodill
WHWTCA, President

This health statement was approved by the Board of Directors of the WHWTCA on January 3, 2016 and amended on October 19, 2019 to include the addition of the genetic test for Craniomandibular Osteopathy.

Please direct any questions to the Chair of our Health Committee, Kay McGuire DVM
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