

Cerebellar Hypoplasia

As breeders of this wonderful breed we are all concerned over the health of our dogs. We have all experienced different difficulties with the breeding aspect, and have had no answers as to the many problems we have faced.

I was told when I first started to breed 17 years ago that if I bred long enough that I would experience every problem there was in the breed. I have been very fortunate over the years to have not had any major difficulties with this breed. In the last two years I have had a problem that I had never seen before and wanted some answers as to the cause and the prevalence of this syndrome I was now facing.

I have spoken to a few breeders in recent years that have had a puppy that developed a head shake soon after the puppy began to get up on its feet and interact with its littermates. At first it is very subtle and you have to watch the puppy for awhile to determine if what you're seeing is correct.

These puppies appear to be the smaller ones in the litter. Sex seems to be more female than male. There doesn't appear to be any other problems with the

puppy. They play like their litter mates and their appetites seem to be normal.

Recently I had one of these puppies. I have seen this before in a couple of puppies that friends of mine have had. I called a few of the breeders and asked if they had ever had a puppy that had this shaking of the head, and was told yes by all of them.

These puppies were not related in any way by pedigree. I ask what became of those puppies and was told that they were all sold as pets. One of the breeders told me she kept the puppy and bred her and she had never produced it in her offspring.

I wanted to find out something about this as it was starting to appear as if it was more common in the breed than I had first thought. I took this puppy to my vet and asked him if he had ever seen this before, he said he had never seen this before and had no idea what it could be and thought that it may be genetic.

I then ask another vet that came to my home to buy a different puppy if he had ever seen this before and what could be the cause of it, he also had no idea. He told me to start my research by looking for something that could be related to the nervous system, at least



George, Lillian & Mia

now, I had an idea as where to start to look for an answer.

I started my search by accessing the hospital library where I work and found some information on Shaky Head Syndrome in people. These articles stated it could be caused by a problem with the inner ear or with the eyes.

After reading many articles on the inner ear I came to the conclusion this didn't seem to be a possible cause. I didn't notice any problems with the puppies hearing or eye sight and there as no Strabismus noticed in the puppy's eyes, now I was back to square one.

At this time the puppy was about 16 weeks old and doing well except when she became excited her head would shake back and forth in a tremor like manner, it appeared that the shaking increased when I first came home or when she was happy to see me. When the puppy was sleeping or when it was playing with her litter mates there was no sign of the shaking. Being very determined to find the cause I again researched other sources and found some information on Cerebellar Hypoplasia. It appeared that the symptoms were the same as I had noticed in this puppy. Now if it is this or not I will probably will never now.

I decide to write this article just to provide some information on this syndrome to give breeders information on

a possible cause of this problem.

Cerebellar Hypoplasia is a term used to describe a condition in which the Cerebellum in the brain either fails to fully develop or begins to degenerate shortly after birth the cause may be genetic or related to an infection of the puppy with herpes viruses. While still in the uterus or the cause is often unknown.

Herpes virus in the dog has been associated with the development of cerebellar hypoplasia. The genetic form is more common in certain breeds including Irish Setters Airedales and Chows; there was no mention of the Yorkshire Terrier.

The condition is first noticed at about two weeks of age. The head will tremor and bob especially when the puppy attempts to do a function. When at rest the head does not have tremors. The tremors may progress and become severe. If the tremors are severe enough when to puppy tries' to reach for the nipple they will have a difficult time nursing and do not flourish. If the tremors are non progressive, the dog may only have mild intentional tremors throughout its life. These dogs are able to lead a very normal and happy life. There is no treatment for this condition.

I have kept in contact with the person who adopted this puppy and have been told that the tremors have lessened with age and it mostly appears when the puppy becomes very excited.

We probably will never have an answer, but I felt that it was important to share the research I have done to try to find a cause for this syndrome. It appears to be common in the Yorkshire Terrier as I have spoken with a number of breeders who have experienced this on occasion in a limited amount.

I hope this will shed some light and help those who have had a puppy with this shaky head or those in the future who may see this in one of their puppies. I have had no luck in finding another resources that explain the cause of this syndrome.

Connie Conn
Moonlight Yorkies

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