

Miniature Schnauzer Health & Genetics

<http://www.mscc.ca/additional.html>

The following information and articles are intended to raise awareness, not to prescribe medical treatment or offer self-diagnostics. If you have encountered any medical condition described here, we encourage you to discuss with your Veterinarian.

Does the breed have any health problems?

Yes, as do all pure-bred dogs, and for that matter, mixed breeds as well. Purebred dogs are bred from a confined gene pool. This means that veterinary science can identify diseases that are known to occur in a given breed, and breeders can work to screen carriers of the known diseases out of their breeding programs. Mixed breeds, on the other hand, can carry the genetic diseases occurring in each of their ancestral breeds. This makes for a totally unknown "genetic soup", in terms of both health and more importantly - temperament, appearance and behavior.

Because purebred dogs have closed, limited gene pools different breeds may have a higher incidence of some inherited diseases, and nearly no incidence of others.

Before we go into a short summary of the more notable health problems in this breed, it should be noted that Miniature Schnauzers are overall a pretty healthy lot.

Mycobacterium Avium Infection

A relatively new deadly disease discovered in Miniature Schnauzers. ATB (aka AVTB) mycobacterial infection in the tuberculosis family. It is an environmental pathogen that is believed to be contracted through contact with infected bird droppings, contaminated water, etc. While it is a disease primarily found in birds, it has also been diagnosed in dogs, cats, goats, rabbits and humans with compromised immune systems. While the symptoms may be temporarily suppressed by antibiotics and certain drugs used for HIV patients, it is almost always fatal to the host. Most miniature schnauzer cases are not diagnosed until the dog is 1 1/2 years or older.

C.J.C. or Congenital Juvenile Cataracts

are present at birth and can progress to cause blindness. Surgery is available but costly. A Veterinary Ophthalmologist can diagnose puppies at an early age.

Progressive Retinal Atrophy - P.R.A.

causes the retina of the eye to deteriorate slowly. Symptoms may not show until the dog is three years old or older, beginning with night blindness. P.R.A. eventually blinds the dog. It is incurable. An Electrorretinograph can be used for early detection, but this tool is not available to most breeders.

Urinary Tract Infections - Urolithiasis

occur at a higher rate in Miniature Schnauzers than other breeds. Clinical signs include frequent urination and blood may be present in the urine. Untreated, they can lead to bladder stones. If severe enough this may cause urinary blockage, which is a medical emergency. To muddy the waters, this problem can occur in dogs for reasons unrelated to heredity. Treatment involves prescription diets, antibiotics and/or surgery.

Pancreatitis

occurs with increasing frequency in Miniature Schnauzers. The exact mechanism is poorly understood, but appears to be associated with the fact that many Miniature Schnauzers have high blood serum lipids (fats). Clinical signs generally include vomiting and diarrhea, abdominal pain, lethargy and depression. It is an emergency situation which warrants immediate veterinary care. Treatment includes intravenous fluids, antibiotics and dietary control. The dog will probably have to be on a low fat diet.

Cushings Disease

is also encountered with some frequency. Females are more affected than males and often fall

within the six to eight year age group. Initial clinical signs are increased thirst and urination and an increase in body weight. Later observable is a change in body type, a pot bellied appearance, thinning of the dog's coat and other changes involving the skin. Sudden blindness is also associated with this condition. Cushings is related to over production of adrenal cortex hormones. Various medications are available to help control the disorder.

Hypothyroidism

is the number one inherited disease of dogs in general. The metabolism is affected, causing depression, weight gain, hair loss, lethargy and an intolerance to cold. Untreated, it can lead to immune system, cardiovascular, and reproductive problems. Testing and treatment is relatively easy and inexpensive. Daily medication can give good results and many dogs live healthy lives. When it occurs in young dogs or several members of a family, a genetic cause (autoimmune disease) is likely.

Schnauzer Bumps (blackheads along the back) or other skin problems.

Some can be related to allergy, metabolic disorders or simple lack of good care. Good quality diet and attention to cleanliness and grooming go a long way in preventing skin problems.

Dental problems.

Many Miniature Schnauzers are very susceptible to periodontal disease. Food and plaque are trapped, leading to infection and receding gums. Some individuals may require frequent dental cleanings - or you can **get into the good habit of brushing your dog's teeth**; Your veterinarian should be able to show you how to clean and inspect the mouth for problems.

Other genetically caused problems

also include hepatic shunts, (abnormal routing of the blood vessels in the liver) epilepsy, juvenile kidney failure, autoimmune and heart defects. These problems occur frequently enough to be mentioned.

If you purchase a Miniature Schnauzer with these or other major disease that your Veterinarian feels could be inherited, you should notify the breeder. Miniature Schnauzers have their share of inherited problems. As do all dogs regardless of being purebred or of mixed breeding - or humans for that matter (there are more than 3,000 known genetic diseases to affect human beings.)

Ear Infections

The hair in the ear can be excessive and will trap moisture. The hair is easily removed by the groomer, vet or owner which should greatly decrease if not eliminate the problem all together.