

BFCA Veterinary Health Survey Results 2007

The BFCA Health Committee expresses appreciation to the 32 veterinary clinics that submitted survey results to our committee to assist in evaluating today's Bichons in terms of health. Only one veterinarian views the breed as "unhealthy". Statistically Bichons seem to be one of the healthier breeds, although the problems that do exist can be troubling. It is to improve their overall health that we do surveys and maintain data, enabling us to know better where to spend those research dollars that are available to us.

It is not surprising that most surveys lacked information in 100% of the areas covered. Yet we gained enough responses to use these as indicators of which inherited conditions seem to be predominant when combined with breeder responses. The number of Bichons seen monthly varies between 5 and 55 with an average of 20. Of these, the percentage of pets (90%) is far greater, with estimated averages of pets ranging between 70 and 100%.

Of particular interest to the committee and to breeders is the ranking of conditions of greatest concern in our breed. They ranked in a three way tie: atopy/allergy, calcium oxalate or "inherited" uroliths (stones) and patellar luxation. Also mentioned were dental disease, seizures and diabetes in very low numbers. Dental disease drew great response in percentage of dogs affected however. Since dental disease leads to systemic diseases, we continue to be concerned that pets are not having adequate dental care!

Of the 20 diseases mentioned, low numbers were reported from 0 to less than 1% in Addison's, diabetes, dyskinesia, Kartagener's/PCD, Legg-Calve-Perthes, liver shunt and seizures. The surprise here is diabetes because we continue to get reports from pet owners and inquiries about the disease in Bichons. Addison's is the least reported to the health committee at zero. Also very low and averaging less than 5 % were autoimmune disease, cancer, Cushing's, heart failure, hip dysplasia, pancreatitis, renal failure and tracheal collapse (though all had been seen in some of these clinics). Cushings, like diabetes, does get reported with some frequency by pet owners contacting the bichonhealth web site.

Atopy/allergy and hot spots continue to be the bane of Bichons owners! Hot spots were reported on average at 19% and allergy/atopy at 10-75%, with an overall average of 30% and that must surely be low! Maybe our veterinarians look at them and say, "It's a Bichon so we know he/she has allergies". The same could be true of dental disease because the problem does persist in the breed.

Calcium oxalate uroliths (stones) ranked from 5-40% with an average of those mentioning stones at 12%. Patellar luxation was rated from 1% to 50%. Note that only one clinic said 1%! The average of those who listed it was a high 17%. BFCA has supported research in these three inherited conditions and others.

The other rating was in the category of Seen More Often, Seen Less Often or the same. The following results are printed in order of responses:

Seen More Often	
Atopy	18
Calcium Oxalate Stones	17
Dental Disease	14
Hot spots	14 (note: goes along with high atopy)
Patellar Luxation	15
Autoimmune Diseases	6
Cushings Disease	6
Pancreatitis	5
Cancer	4
Renal Failure	4
Seizures (Epilepsy)	3
Diabetes & Heart Failure	2 each
Kartagener's/PCD & shunt	1 each
Seen Less Often	
Legg-Calve-Perthes	8
Heart Failure	4
Liver Shunts	4
Tracheal Collapse	4
Calcium Oxalate Stones	3
Diabetes	4
Hip Dysplasia	3
Pancreatitis	2

All remaining conditions received one or two responses indicating they were seen less often. Conclusions from survey results indicate that the following diseases continue to be seen in Bichons Frises in significant numbers: Allergy/Atopy (with hot spots), Calcium Oxalate stones, Patellar Luxation, Dental Disease and Endocrine diseases (with possible connections to treatment for allergy).

(Anne Jones BFCA Health Committee)