

East Anglian Collie Association



Degenerative Myelopathy (DM)

Definition

DM (originally known as Canine Degenerative Myelopathy) is a progressive inherited disease involving the gradual and progressive loss of hind limb coordination, in dogs generally over the age of eight years. It is not breed-specific and has recently been confirmed in a Collie by the Collie Health Foundation (Collie Club of America) and the University of Missouri.

Symptoms

An affected dog begins to drag a hind limb, wearing away the toenails. As the disease progresses, gait becomes uncoordinated and the dog often stumbles when cornering. Gradual paralysis spreads to involve the forelimbs and may eventually lead to faecal incontinence.

In its early stages DM is commonly referred to as 'arthritis', 'old age', 'hip dysplasia' or 'spinal problems' and does not appear to be a painful condition.

Mode of Inheritance

Although the University of Missouri has isolated a DM gene, the DNA test is not yet fool-proof as it can only determine if a dog is at risk of developing the disease. Not all dogs with the gene mutation are at risk of DM though a clear test ensures the dog will **not** develop DM.

For anyone interested, several laboratories offer a genetic test for DM using buccal swabs, ranging in price from £76 to £30.

Despite DM not yet being an official health scheme for Rough and Smooth Collies, the KC will publish results if test certificates are submitted to them.

The Way Forward

It is important to confirm a diagnosis as there is no treatment for the condition and the prognosis is poor.

If any of your previous 'oldies' have had a tendency for their back-ends to collapse in old age, then it might be worth considering breeding away from the problem by using lines clear of the problem.