

2001 National Breed Survey

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The Airedale Terrier Club of America (ATCA) had the good fortune of participating with the Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine in a breed health survey. The results give some insights into the breed and confirm many positive characteristics of the breed that have been previously believed.

The nature of the project was an epidemiology survey. This kind of research is very subject to error and over interpretation. However, it can provide insight and direction for further investigation. The errors of this kind of study is it's intrinsic bias, since participants self select and the information provided relies on the memory and accuracy of information from the participants. The ability of participants to understand (in a similar manner to other participants) the questions also becomes an issue. In the case of this survey, the survey participants were weighted heavily toward breeders and owners who tend to be more intensive, who are likely to have healthier and higher quality dogs than average, so some of the reported disease frequency may be low. Since few dogs actually get necropsied to find the actual cause of death, some inaccuracy can occur since death causes are the best bets of the veterinarians involved, but proof may not have been available. All this said, the results are far superior to any previous information on our breed.

The major conclusion is that the breed is in great shape! Temperament evaluations were consistent with the expected and the breed has fewer behavioral issues than average for dogs in general. Airedales are active, excitable dogs that are happy and generally confident. Cancer, renal failure, and heart disease were the three most commonly identified causes of death, almost always in senior animals. In the survey, average lifespan was reported to be slightly less than 12 years of age. Natural breeding was reported as producing the largest litters, followed by chilled semen artificial insemination, then frozen semen AI. This is consistent with reports in the literature for all breeds. Ninety six percent of the dogs in the survey were fed dry dog food, most commonly premium brands. There was no identified association between specific diets and longevity or health. There was an association identified between the weight of the dogs and the development

of hip dysplasia, implying a role of overfeeding in the development of hip dysplasia.

There was no identified association between lawn chemicals and most disease in the survey. There was an association between flea dips, lawn chemicals and other flea products with hot spots. However, an obvious explanation exists for this relationship. Dogs with fleas are likely to both get hot spots and to be exposed to a variety of flea treatment products.

Survey findings were consistent with a breed in good shape health wise and with regard temperament. Good news for the breed across the board!