

How long do Airedales live?

Typically, Airedales live 11 to 14 years. They frequently remain active even late in life. Two prominent studs serve as examples. CH. Bravo True Grit was (at his time) the top winning Airedale of all time. He lived to be 15 years old and was seen chasing a squirrel the day before he died. His son, CH Finlair Tiger of Stone Ridge beat his dad's show record and lived a healthy 14 years. Both these dogs from the 1980's are common in current Airedale pedigrees, including the Airedales at Texter Kennels. "Jack" discussed in the stories section of our website was a Finlair Tiger son, and also lived well past 14 years. I specifically mention True Grit and Finlair Tiger as examples of longevity for reason. They are so common in current pedigrees, that any dog that has a rare congenital illness is very likely to have these dogs in their pedigree...perhaps numerous times. Both of these dogs have been (probably incorrectly) implicated as carriers of a number of genetic diseases. They probably carried some, ALL DOGS DO CARRY SOME GENETIC BAGGAGE, but we always take such stories with an element of skepticism. We incorporate the information as part of the total evaluation of breeding stock. As the illustration shows, three generations of Airedales living past 14 years is pretty dawg-gone good! Below is a copy of an article on a related topic.

Longevity and Genetics

The question of dogs dying young(er) comes up periodically with lots of diverse opinions. I have a unique background to access these events and opinions. I have a masters degree in geno-toxicology (toxins causing birth defects/cancers) and spent a number of years doing research on the molecular biology of aging. I am currently a practicing veterinarian.

Certain breeds of dogs clearly have a problem with premature deaths due to cancers. Cancers are known to have genetic predispositions, although the mechanism of the predisposition is not known for most cancers. Boxers very commonly die at age 7 to 10 from cancers. Twelve year old boxers are the exception. The same is true in Scottish Terriers. Golden Retrievers are also clearly predisposed as well. There is some evidence to support the idea that Airedales have some predisposition to cancers, but the problem

is not nearly as pervasive as in some other breeds. Many breeders are producing dogs that live to 13 to 15 years old in our breed. However, I suspect this is luck, not design. Usually, by the time a breeding dog gets cancer (a disease of the aged!), it is frequently a great-grandparent! Are there ANY breeders that will cull 4 generations of breeding stock because one older dog died of cancer? Not likely, and probably not appropriate! We will have to await genetic tests for certain predisposing genes to screen young breeding stock for disease potential. Those screens will probably be available for many diseases within the next 20 years. Some are already available for some breeds and diseases.

As for the observation of "more cancer", it is true. However, it is probably not for the frequently voiced concern of "toxic exposure". Cancer is a disease of aging. Youth is infrequently effected. Since pets are living longer generally now (see below), we see more cancers as vets. Living longer? Yep! It is a factor of the success of progress in veterinary medicine and pet husbandry. In the 1960s, most vets saw more "hit by cars" in a week than a typical vet sees now in a year! Why? More and better fences, and pets considered as family members rather than "just dogs". They are kept safer. Nutritional problems in the 1960s? Common. Commercially available, quality diets have all but eradicated these issues. Distemper in the 1960s? Daily event at vet clinics. Now? A handful of cases a year unless the practice is in an impoverished area, where vaccines are not given. Vaccines for distemper and parvo are extraordinarily effective when appropriately used. Why do vets notice these things? Income! Over the last 30 years, vets have had to replace the hit by car, poor nutrition, and infectious disease income! What do we replace it with? Geriatric medicine. Pets are living long, vets have to develop new skills. The vet industry pays a lot of attention to these trends. Yea, not what you often see on Internet lists, but things are dramatically better for dogs now than ever before and they are living longer and living better! And vets are glad!