

Border Terrier Health Report 2015

The first phase of an all-breed survey by the Kennel Club was completed at the end of December 2014. A detailed questionnaire was circulated to owners of registered dogs via email and the survey was also available on-line for completion. This survey will provide an interesting comparison with the data obtained in a similar survey completed in 2004. One difference between the two surveys is the method used. In producing the 2004 survey the questionnaire was circulated by traditional mail and was largely restricted to breeders. The 2014 survey was conducted using email and was directed largely at those who had transferred dogs into their name. Thus a large number of 'pet owners' should be included on this occasion.

The results may take some time to be produced given the increased response generated by the more user friendly on-line system. When available the report for border terriers can be compared with our own breed survey and the published results of the 2004 KC survey. Back in 2004 there were no real surprises as the breed were well aware of the breed health status revealed by our own health survey, which is still receiving reports on an ongoing basis. Our survey reveals no fundamental change in the health status of the breed over time and seizures (including CECS cases) remain the most significant clinical problem suspected of having an inherited basis.

In general terms our breed dies later than the aggregated data for all breeds and illness has a tendency to be diagnosed at a later age than for all breed averages. Both trends suggest that the breed has a justifiable reputation for living a long life (circa 14 years) and that most illness is acquired rather than congenital or inherited.

It is only the neurological issues where the border terrier has a tendency to be above average in the occurrence of illness. It is logical to suggest that CECS plays a part in this result but from our own health data there is also a strong indication of a higher than expected number of reports of epilepsy. Of course the accurate diagnosis of both is a challenge and it will be interesting to see if CECS appears in the new KC data when it is published given the raised awareness of the condition over the past decade.

In general terms the border terrier breed is healthy. The Inbreeding Co-efficient of the breed stands at 8.8% at the time of writing and this indicates that inbreeding risk is reasonably contained across the breed as a whole. I believe we can remain content that we are generally producing healthy puppies. We do need to continue to avoid breeding from dogs with a history of seizures whilst continuing to select breeding stock from lines with longevity. However this latter point, selecting for longevity, does not seem to be a difficult challenge.

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