

Association of Bloodhound Breeders Health Survey 2011

A health questionnaire was distributed to UK based ABB members with the Christmas 2010 magazine with the intention of identifying the health status of the breed, the chief causes of death and the extent to which members are carrying out health screens. The intention is to gather data every two years for the foreseeable future to ascertain trends over a period of time, and to gather data that may be useful in constructing a Breed Specific Breeding Strategy.

A total of 26 questionnaires were returned, out of a total of 150 sent out, a response rate of 17%. This initially may seem a bit of a disappointing response. However, the details of 124 hounds, either living at the time of the survey or having passed away during the previous 12 months, were included. This must represent a significant percentage of registered hounds within the UK, perhaps around one fifth (20%) of the current population considering recent low registration numbers (60 puppies registered in 2009, 55 in 2010). The data for 3 non-registered hounds that was submitted has not been included in the results.

The last full health survey carried out on the breed was by The Bloodhound Club in the late 1970's. The 1970's surveys typically covered a total sample of around 180 hounds which at that time was estimated to be around 12% (from a total population estimate of 1500). Where appropriate, comparisons have been made with this survey.

The 1970's surveys distinguished between hounds kept in the home and those in outside kennels. Since the majority of hounds are now housed indoors, even those kept by the bigger breeding kennels, it is not thought useful to make this comparison in this survey. The 1970's surveys did not make any reference to health screening.

Question 1. How many hounds did you own in 2010?

Numbers of hounds owned ranged from 1 hound (5 owners) to 15 (1 owner) with an average of 5 hounds per owner.

Eight of the forms submitted represented 6+ hounds, and four of these represented over 10 hounds. Therefore it can be concluded that:

- a) a greater percentage of the hounds sampled are owned by the larger kennels
- b) the sample includes a significant proportion of the breeding stock likely to be contributing to the future population of hounds bred in the UK.

This contrasts with the 1970's surveys where a slight majority of hounds were in pet homes.

Question 2. Please supply sex and age of hounds at 31st December 2010.

Of the hounds sampled, 44 % were dog hounds and 56% bitches. The slightly higher number of bitches is perhaps explained by the fact that hounds belonging to larger kennels made up the bulk of the sample, where breeding bitches may be more numerous than stud males.

Ages ranged from 2 months to 12 years, with an average of 4.6 years. 20% of the sample were into their veteran years (i.e. 7 years old or more) and in many cases well into their veteran years.

Question 3. Did any of your hounds die or were put to sleep during 2010? If so how many?

13 hounds were lost by members who responded to the questionnaire. Death rate was therefore 10.5% of the population sampled.

Question 4. If yes to question 3, what was the cause of death?

Cause of death	Number	%age of deaths
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Torsion or complications following bloat/torsion	3	23%
Lymphoma/lymphosarcoma	2	15%
Old age	2	15%
Cancer (unspecified)	1	8%
Auto-immune problem	1	8%
Haemorrhagic gastroenteritis	1	8%
Enlarged spleen	1	8%
Poisoning (unidentified source)	1	8%
Bilateral hip Osteoarthritis (euthanased for)	1	8%

The two main causes of death were therefore cancer (including lymphoma) which claimed 3 hounds (23%) and bloat/torsion and related after effects which also claimed 3 hounds (23%). Further surveys will need to be conducted before a trend can be predicted but there can be few surprises here for those who have been in the breed a while.

The 1970's surveys produced a similar picture, with cancer being the chief cause of death followed closely by bloat, other than one year when there was an unprecedented number of accidents or non-natural causes contributing to death of hounds.

Hounds already recorded as having died during 2010 in question 4 were not included in the following question:

Question 5. Did any of your hounds receive non-routine veterinary treatment (i.e. not vaccinations etc) during 2010? If so please specify the condition the treatment was for.

Cause of Vet visit	Number	%age of total sample
Accident (torn ear, eye puncture, torn muscle etc)	6	4.8%
Ear Infection	5	4.0%
Removal of skin tumour (benign)	4	3.2%
Treatment for internal infection	2	1.6%
Internal obstruction	2	1.6%
Diarrhoea	2	1.6%
Arthritis	2	1.6%
Limp	2	1.6%
Spey or Pyometra and subsequent spey	2	1.6%
Peritonitis	1	0.8%
Teeth extraction	1	0.8%
Kidney problem	1	0.8%
Skin irritation (allergy)	1	0.8%
Bee sting	1	0.8%
Conjunctivitis	1	0.8%
Eczema	1	0.8%
Cherry eye	1	0.8%
Fits	1	0.8%
Bite wound	1	0.8%

False pregnancy	1	0.8%
Ongoing pain control	1	0.8%
Unspecified neck problem	1	0.8%

The Bloodhound has been singled out for special attention recently, with eye issues, skin issues, and hind movement identified as causes of concern. One of the key aims of this survey is, as far as is possible, to determine the extent of these problems. We know these issues are seen, but is the extent of the problem as widespread as The Kennel Club suggest?

As can be seen in the table above, accidents of various kinds were the biggest cause of non-routine vet visits. This was followed by ear infections, some owners indicating long term treatment and veterinary ear maintenance was required.

Omitting eye injuries and the single case of conjunctivitis, only two hounds received veterinary treatment for an eye condition (1.6%). This compared to 13.8% of hounds in 1977 receiving treatment for eye trouble.

Only 2 hounds (1.6%) sampled received veterinary treatment for skin issues, one for an allergy, one for eczema. The 1977 survey included 11% of hounds sampled receiving treatment for skin issues. Given the advancement in parasite control and treatment since the previous survey took place, it is perhaps not surprising that incidences of skin disease are reduced.

It is not possible to categorically make predictions about trends from one survey but certainly breeders feel major improvements have been made to eyes and skin in the intervening years and the most recent survey would seem to support this. Clearly a longer term survey is required to quantify this statement accurately.

Interestingly, the 1970's surveys featured issues surrounding the whelping of puppies as one of the greatest causes of non-routine veterinary treatment (4.9% of the total population sampled received treatment for this in 1978). No such issues were identified in this survey, but perhaps this is not surprising given the low numbers of puppies registered (only 51 puppies born in 2010).

It was noted that there was a significant absence of conditions of the major organs (heart, kidney, liver etc) in the 1970's surveys and certainly that would still seem to be largely the case, perhaps surprising for a large breed.

Overall the results above do not at face value suggest immediate cause for concern, and the range of diseases and ailments noted one would imagine could be found in a similar survey of most other breeds of dog.

Question 6. Have you had any of your current hounds hip scored?

Two owners indicated that they had had hounds hip scored using the BVA/Kennel Club scheme and the results of a total of 5 hounds (4 % of the sample) were submitted. The scheme is scored from a maximum of 106, 53 for each hip, where the lower the score the less the joint is affected by dysplasia.

Hound	Total Score (both hips)	Grading
1	14	Fair
2	25	Borderline
3	13	Fair
4	19	Borderline
5	13	Fair

(Grading 0-4 = excellent, 5-10 = good, 11-18 = fair, 19-25 – borderline, 26-35 = mild, 36-50 = moderate, 51-106 = severe). The BVA/ Kennel Club scheme records (for all

Bloodhounds hip scored between 2001 and 2008) an average of 21, with a range of 0-62.

Of the hounds whose hip score results are included in this sample, 60% scored as fair, and 40% were categorised as 'borderline'. It is not possible to draw any significant conclusions from such a small sample, more hounds need to be scored to gain a true picture.

Two further owners indicated that they did get their breeding animals x-rayed but did not participate in the BVA/KC scheme.

Question 7. Have you had any of your current hounds elbow scored?

Rather more owners indicated that they had had their hounds elbow scored. This may be because elbow dysplasia, especially UAP, is perceived to be more prevalent in the breed than hip dysplasia. A total of 15 hounds that had been elbow scored (representing 12% of the sample) from 4 different owners were included in the survey and scored as follows, where the lower the score (on a scale of 0-3) the less the joint is affected by dysplasia:

Hound	Total Score (both elbows)	Grading
1	1	Mild
2	1	Mild
3	1	Mild
4	1	Mild
5	0	Normal
6	1	Mild
7	1	Mild
8	2	Moderate
9	2	Moderate
10	0	Normal
11	0	Normal
12	0	Normal
13	0	Normal
14	2	Moderate
15	1	Mild

(Grading 0 = normal, 1 = mild, 2 = moderate, 3 = severe)

33% of the sample were scored as normal, 47% were scored as mildly dysplastic, 20% were scored as moderately dysplastic, with no hounds scoring as severely affected by dysplasia.

Again two of the responses indicated their hound's elbows were x-rayed prior to breeding but the results were not submitted to the BVA/KC scheme.

Question 8. Have you had any of your current hounds eye tested?

A total of 7 owners recorded that they had their hounds eye tested, largely one assumes at Bloodhound Club organised eye testing sessions. 10 hounds from the sample were eye scored, the owners recollection of the results varied.

Hound	Eye test results (owners own words)
1	Good
2	Average
3	Pronounced macroblepheron, l + r lower entropian
4	Average
5	Macroblepheron, r slight upper

	entropian, lesion peripapillary
6	OK
7	OK
8	Slight entropian one eye
9	Not bad
10	Not bad

The answers given here were on the whole too arbitrary to make any statistically accurate judgements, and further eye testing is required.

The owners of hounds 3 and 5 indicated that despite the comments of the assessor, the hounds had not showed eye irritation and had not required any veterinary treatment.

Question 9. Have you had any of your current hounds tested for any other genetic/potentially genetic disease?

Only 1 owner answered positively to this question, confirming that they had a hound or hounds which had been heart tested under the OFA scheme. They did not indicate the number of hounds this applied to or the result.

Summary

- A total of 124 hounds (44% dogs, 56% bitches) were included in the survey, which is thought to represent approximately 20% of the current UK population of KC registered Bloodhounds. This can be regarded as a representative sample.
- The chief causes of death were bloat/torsion and cancer, a situation that has not altered since the 1970's.
- The principle reasons for non-routine vet visits were accidents and injuries, and ear infections. The incidence of treatment for skin issues and eye issues were minimal and much reduced since the 1970's surveys were carried out.
- Relatively low numbers of hounds are currently hip scored, and whilst the scores do not cause major concern, the results are inconclusive due to the low numbers involved.
- Owners seem more concerned about elbow scoring and a representative number of elbow scores were submitted. No hounds in the sample had severe dysplasia but more hounds had moderate or mild dysplasia than no dysplasia at all, suggesting this is an area that needs attention.
- Owners recollections of the results of eye testing were variable and further eye testing should be carried out, though few of the reported conditions resulted in veterinary treatment.
- Owners are, on the whole, not carrying out any other forms of health screening.

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