

# Clumber Spaniel Club of America Genetic Health Committee

Roe Froman, DVM Chairperson



Dear fellow veterinarian,

Welcome to the world of clumber spaniels. Largest of the spaniel breeds, clumbers are generally quite easy going. We'd like to help acquaint you with some of the more unusual, as well as the common problems your clumber patients may encounter.

Clumbers are one of the first ten original AKC breeds, but their numbers are few. We work with a limited gene pool, and are striving to improve the health and soundness of our dogs. Great progress has been made in the past decade.

Due to their thick ear leather and heavy, lowset ear, infections are not unusual. Routine cleaning can help to minimize problems. Clumbers who suffer from recurrent ear infections should be evaluated for possible food hypersensitivities. Secondary yeast infections may be related to underlying food allergies. Clumber lower eyelids are often "v" or diamond shaped, in accordance with the breed standard of conformation. Entropion may occur, but minor deviations of the lids may require only monitoring until full head maturation is reached (about two to three years of age). Ectropion is also sometimes seen, but care must be taken not to confuse the normal, diamond shape of the lower lid with ectropion. A properly shaped clumber lid will often be looser than other breeds, but should not roll in or out.

Eosinophilic panosteitis is not unusual in growing clumber pups. Like other large breeds, too rapid growth may play a role in this shifting leg lameness. EoPan is the most common cause of lameness in clumbers between six to twelve months of age, when there is no evidence of injury. Shoulder or elbow abnormalities (OCD, ununited anconeal processes or fractured coronoids) should of course always be ruled out. Eosinophilic panosteitis is self-limiting and resolves once bone growth is complete. EoPan may also present as an intermittent hind leg lameness.

Hip dysplasia is not uncommon in the breed. Their substantial bone and heavy rear musculing often seem to minimize overt clinical signs in clumbers, even though their radiographs may show changes which could be crippling in other breeds. Clumbers are a chondrodystrophic (dwarf) breed, and have an acetabular conformation which is naturally more shallow than that of retrievers, rottweilers or german shepherd dogs. A website ([www.hoiho.org/hips](http://www.hoiho.org/hips)) of digital photos includes OFA passing clumber hips, as well as examples of puppy preliminaries, young dogs and varying grades of dysplastic dogs. We hope you will find it useful, and appreciate your feedback. Chondroitin sulfate/glucosamine supplements such as Cosequin have frequently proven useful in managing clumbers with hip dysplasia.

Clumber pups should be raised on a large breed puppy food, and excessive weight gain should be prevented.

The long, low body structure of the clumber may predispose them to intervertebral disc disease. Both cervical and thoracic disc problems may occur. Medical or surgical therapies can be of great benefit. Allergic dermatitis and food hypersensitivities may be present in clumber spaniels. Inflammatory bowel disease is a less common condition which is sometimes seen.

Autoimmune hemolytic anemia is a serious disease which has been encountered in clumber spaniels. Hypothyroidism is not unusual in clumbers. We recommend the thyroid panel at Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine. Elevated autoantibodies are often a precursor to full blown hypothyroidism. If autoantibodies are present (even if they fall within "normal" range) we recommend a retest six to twelve months later.

Rarely, portosystemic (liver) shunts have been reported in clumbers. They may present typically, as young pups who begin to suffer neurological problems at weaning. Importantly, there are also a few case reports of adult (18 months to 4 years) clumbers with late onset seizures and no prior clinical signs. Liver shunts in clumbers have most often been extrahepatic (the reverse of most large breed dogs), and frequently amenable to surgical correction.

There have been occasional reports of punctate cataracts. These minute opacities in the lens in no way interfere with vision. They are not progressive. PRA (progressive retinal atrophy) has been reported rarely.

Cardiomyopathy is an uncommon but reported condition in clumber spaniels.

Pyruvate dehydrogenase deficiency is a rare condition in clumbers. PDH deficiency is an enzymatic deficiency which leads to profound exercise intolerance (affected dogs may present with the complaint that they can't make it through a daily walk of a few blocks). It appears to be a genetic problem, and research is ongoing at both the University of Missouri and the University of Southern California/Davis. Conclusive diagnosis is by muscle biopsy.

It is quite common for young female clumbers NOT to have their first estrous cycle until they are 12 to 14 months old. This is not unusual, and should not be cause for concern.

Many clumbers are natural whelpers, but uterine inertia may necessitate cesarean section. Anasarca (water puppies) is also known to occur in the breed.

Anesthesia in clumbers should be straightforward, given normal precautions. Ketamine/Valium/Isoflurane or Propofol/Iso are both reasonable protocols. Rarely, excessively short muzzles or an elongated soft palate may make anesthetic recovery a bit more comparable to brachycephalic breeds.

The Clumber Spaniel Club of America also subsidizes a DNA bank, which allows us to store DNA from *\*all\** clumbers (pets and show dogs alike). This DNA bank, operated by GeneSearch LLC, requires simply three mls of blood drawn into a heparinized (purple top) tube. The fee is minimal (\$15 to the client, with the additional \$5 subsidized by the CSCA). Many veterinarians have graciously drawn these samples at little or no charge, when seeing a clumber patient for another reason. I will be happy to provide further information, and you may also contact GeneSearch directly. The GeneSearch phone number is: (301) 770-6970. Mailers and order forms may be attained directly via their website at

[Info@gensearch.net](mailto:Info@gensearch.net)

Their mailing address is:

GeneSearch LLC  
5510 Wilkins Court  
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Clumbers are in general a gentle, stoic breed. Their calm, accepting nature makes them enjoyable patients. If I can be of any assistance, or if I can answer any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

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