

TERRIER GROUP



“For our dogs to do what they were bred for—easily dispatching vermin and other furry troublemakers—they need to be able to catch and shake. And even if your Norfolk Terrier never meets anything resembling live prey, good teeth and sound oral health remain vitally important.”

plaque mineralizes and turns to the hard substance known as tartar. The inevitable periodontal disease that accompanies this process is caused by bacteria that damage the gums, bone, and other supporting structures of the teeth.

In addition to wreaking havoc in the mouth, these same bacteria move into the dog's blood-

stream and are associated with both endocarditis (inflammation of the interior of the heart) and valvular disease. An inflamed and untreated mouth can, indeed, shorten a dog's life.

So, what can you do to keep your Norfolk's dental problems to a minimum? For one, start by looking at their teeth when they are puppies. Like everything else, if your dog gets used to having you open her mouth as a baby, it will be much easier to handle her when she's an adult. Check molars as well as canines. And make sure your veterinarian takes a good look at annual exams.

It's hard to brush the teeth of small dogs, especially since most toothbrushes and finger-brushes are way too big to fit easily. But there are products that can be added to their water, gels you can apply with your fingers, and chews that are specifically intended to promote good oral hygiene. Whatever method you choose, make it one you can faithfully execute. That nifty oral healthcare kit won't help your dog if it is relegated to a kitchen cabinet. At the very least, examining your dog's mouth on the same day you give monthly heartworm preventative is a great idea.

And don't be afraid to have your dog undergo a full dental exam, under anesthesia, if you are advised to do so. We often gulp when faced with the cost of such a procedure,

but if it means a better life for your Norfolk, then the cost is justified.

The American Veterinary Dental College (AVDC) is recognized as the specialist certification organization in veterinary dentistry by the American Board of Veterinary Specialties. AVDC diplomates are veterinary dental specialists, and you can find them online if you are concerned that your local veterinarian may not be as well-versed in dental care as you would like.

In addition, the American Veterinary Medical Association sponsors National Pet Dental Health Month every February. Many veterinarians offer low-cost dental exams and teeth cleanings during this time. So now you have plenty of time to plan ahead to assure that your Norfolk has bright white teeth and a healthy smile!

—Sheila Foran,

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[The Norfolk Terrier Club](#)

Norwich Terriers

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUDING PET OWNERS IN BREED HEALTH SURVEYS

Health surveys are essential to monitoring population health for both people and their dogs. In the United States, the National Center for Health Statistics administers a

survey questionnaire called the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) to collect data used to monitor trends in human illness and disability and to track progress toward achieving national health goals. Likewise, data collection is essential to monitoring the health trends of our dogs. This information is vital to understanding changes in disease incidence, improving the breed, and sometimes even breed survival. For this reason, the AKC Canine Health Foundation recommends that parent clubs conduct periodic breed health surveys.

Following this recommendation, the Health Committee of the Norwich Terrier Club of America initiated a breed health survey in June 2021. Our goal is to identify the most important health problems in our breed. For the individual dog owner, the most important problem is likely to be one your own dog has experienced, yet that may or may not be an important problem for the breed overall. The only way to get a true idea of a breed's health is to collect data and do statistical analyses.

Data collection is underway now. This column shares our survey design and process. Recognizing that a clear purpose is critical to success, our primary goal was to understand the current health status of Norwich terriers. Like the NHIS, our survey design is

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Norwich Terrier puppies

cross-sectional, meaning that it is a snapshot in time.

Who to survey? Reaching dog owners and ensuring a sample that represents the true population of Norwich Terriers is by far the biggest challenge. Surveying only members of our club will not reach the vast majority. In

an ideal world, all owners of Norwich Terriers would receive the survey and all would reply. Because surveying an entire population is often impossible, survey researchers aim to obtain an “unbiased sample” such that the survey results can be extrapolated and conclusions drawn about the whole population.

What is bias? A sampling method is called biased if it *systematically* favors some outcomes over others. All surveys have some bias, even the most rigorously designed. For example, the NHIS survey is a face-to-face interview and relies on the U.S. Census Bureau and sampling techniques to select a

random sample population that is nationally representative. Yet, preliminary analysis of Quarter 2, 2020, shows a change in the composition of the households in the responding sample (“response bias”). Compared to the prior quarter, less affluent households were under-represented. This happened because personal visits were suspended due to the pandemic and replaced with telephone interviews. The goal is to minimize bias. For example, surveying only our club members or breeders would bias the sample.

How to survey? We decided to implement a web-based survey. Web and email offer distinct advantages. They are the least expensive for large samples. The downside is that the results may not be generalizable to the population as a whole. Our survey will likely reach those who already have greater interest in the breed than most pet owners, such as social media pet groups. The biggest advantage, and our reason for choosing this survey method, is the potential to widen the reach. Despite assurances that we are collecting only de-identified data, breeders and competition dog owners may be reluctant to respond or admit to health problems, fearing stigmatization by other breeders. For this reason, and to gather a representative sample, we wanted to reach as many Norwich Terrier pet owners as possible! We stressed the importance of completing

COURTESY, JANE SCHUBART AND GEORGIA R. COMPTON

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the survey for dogs with health problems and healthy dogs.

Boosting response rates. Response rates tend to be low for surveys in general. To boost the response rate we followed suggestions by Dr. Caroline Coile in her article “Breed Health Surveys That Work” (Canine Health Foundation, 2006). Because a survey that is anticipated is more likely to be completed than one that arrives as a surprise, we publicized our survey through the club’s newsletter and announcements and on social media. We emphasized the survey’s importance and let participants know beforehand how the information would be used. We did not require dog’s names or pedigrees, or owner’s names, as that would surely reduce the response. In fact, we did not ask for any identifying information.

An overly long or confusing survey is less likely to be completed. Our survey is comprehensive and organized by body system. We provided an estimated completion time in the survey announcements. We used both correct medical terms and common disease names and definitions. For most questions we asked how the illness was diagnosed (e.g, via veterinarian or laboratory test). We use branching logic to reduce survey length, cover only one topic per question, and use consistent question formatting and scales. We also provide text

boxes for additional free-form comments to address health concerns not covered by our structured questions. Finally, the questions were reviewed and tested by a subgroup of owners and modified as needed.

Launching the survey. Along with the link to the survey questionnaire, we included a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document and the email address of the survey administrator. We are sending frequent reminders because people tend to forget if not completed right away, and we are encouraging our member-breeders to complete the survey and pass it on to their puppy owners.

Using the results. We will present the survey results as quickly as possible and in various formats, beginning with club’s annual health seminar. This will not be the last breed health survey! We hope that those who participated will feel rewarded and those who did not will be more likely to respond next time. Health problems are dynamic. Future surveys will help us determine whether or not interventions to identify or prevent a problem are successful and whether a new problem is emerging. It is important to use the data both to raise awareness and to raise money to fund research to find genetic markers or better treatments for that disease. The participation of Norwich Terrier owners is essential to gathering information to compile meaningful data

to meet these goals.

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Scottish Terriers

CASHING IN ON A NEW KIND OF BANK

Many people may have heard about the fake cryptocurrency Dogecoin, but recently our Scottish Terrier Club of America found a way for us to get a bigger bang for our buck. We are extremely fortunate to have a geneticist as a member of the Scottish Terrier Club of America and the Scottie Health Trust Fund. Due to his hard work on behalf of all animals, but especially his love of the Scottish Terrier, Michael Bishop has led the charge to help our breed preserve genetics for long-term studies through a partnership between the HTF and Resero Genomics, enabling Scottie owners and preservation breeders to bank the DNA of multiple dogs for a very long time.

One of the main general questions is what exactly is DNA banking?

According to Resero Genomics, “DNA banking is the long-term, secure storage of DNA samples and genetic data generated from specific animal tissue samples.” And while they



Old School: Scottish Terrier Ch. Braeburn’s Close Encounter, 1990 (John Ashbey photo)

don’t currently know how long samples may be banked and remain valid for use, the contract agreement guarantees up to 50 years.

What most people may not understand is when donating their dog’s blood/DNA to a particular study, that particular lab or researcher owns that DNA, and it cannot be used for any other study. By banking DNA with Resero, any owner can send their sam-