

## **More Aussies Needed to Participate in Health Survey**

Australian Terrier Breed Column  
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The health committee of the Australian Terrier Club of America (ATCA) currently has an online health survey generated and maintained by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA). The survey can be found at [http://www.offa.org/surveys/survey\\_austerrier.html](http://www.offa.org/surveys/survey_austerrier.html). It is broken down into three sections.

The first section of the survey includes owner information such as the number of dogs owned, age of the dog being reported and the activities it has participated in (conformation, obedience, barn hunt, etc.). During the first quarter of the current survey, February-June 2015, 168 dogs have been reported, 72 males and 89 bitches. Most percentages in the survey report are based on the total dogs reported, however some section percentages are based on only the number of dogs reported in that section. The average owner, participating in the survey, has been in the breed for 10 years or more. The third section of the survey addresses whelping and any issues associated with breeding. Breeders own the majority of the Aussies reported. 124 dogs (74%) were purchased for confirmation and breeding, producing 5 or more litters. 7% (12 dogs) has had 1-5 litters and 19% (32 dogs) have never been bred.

The second section of the survey covers health issues the owner feels are a problem in the breed and details of any health issues, including Canine Health Information Center (CHIC) results. While 67% (112 dogs) of the Aussies reported so far were felt by their owners to be in excellent health and have never had any health issues, it was reported that Diabetes and Cancer are the most serious health problems our breed faces. 13% (22 dogs) were reported as having Endocrine disorders (Diabetes and Hypothyroid) and 11% (18 dogs) were reported as having cancer (most common types being Mast cell, Hemangiosarcoma and Lung Cancers). 10% (16 dogs) were reported to have dental issues (missing teeth).

The ATCA recommends, since 2010, all breeding stock participate in the CHIC testing of patellas, thyroid and congenital eye issues. 38% (64 dogs), 37% (62 dogs), and 43% (72 dogs) of the total number of Aussies reported were tested for patella luxation, thyroid function, and eye exams, respectively. The following percentages are based on the number of dogs reported in each section. 44 of those tested (68.8%) were found to have normal patellas. 19 (29.7%) were found to have at least one grade 1-patella luxation. Only 1 dog (1.5%) was found to have grade 2- or 3-patella luxation. 49 (79%) reported normal thyroid results. All eye exams were reported as normal by the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists (ACVO) standards.

Is the incidence of these health issues truly so high? 1,080 individuals were registered with AKC during the last five years alone (average of 216/year). By comparison the 168 dogs reported in this quarter of the current survey is just a fraction of the Aussies registered and this isn't counting all the pet puppies that are never registered! We need to encourage ALL Aussie owners, past and present, to participate, not just those that have experienced health issues in, or have bred, their Aussie. This includes owners of pet, show, and performance Aussies. The more Aussies that are entered into the survey the more indicative of the true incidence of the health issues our breed faces. So, if you haven't filled out the survey for all the Aussies you own/have owned, please do so now at [http://www.offa.org/surveys/survey\\_austerrier.html](http://www.offa.org/surveys/survey_austerrier.html)!

All surveys are anonymous, however if you are on Breeder Referral List, you must submit your email at the end of the survey to get credit for participation.

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