

Chinook Guide For Veterinarians

Veterinarian's Guide to the Chinook dog

Owner: Please share this guide with your veterinarian to familiarize him/her with our breed. The Chinook breed is often mistaken for a mixed breed and is treated as such, but we can help you and your Veterinarian understand the certain characteristics that make the Chinook unique.

Veterinarian: The information included in this guide will familiarize you with the unique Chinook dog and most physical and temperamental qualities characteristic to the breed. Please assist the new owners of this Chinook understand the qualities that make up their dog. This guide may be helpful to you and your client in keeping this dog in the proper condition and weight category as well as a reminder of which health conditions are most frequently seen in this breed. We suggest you keep this guide in your client's file. At the time this puppy/dog was transferred from the Breeder to the new owner, the Breeder was a member of Chinooks Worldwide, Inc., sponsor and creator of this informational guide. If you should need to gather further information on the background of this Chinook, please contact the Breeder directly or Chinooks Worldwide, Inc. Health Chairperson, Cheryl Brown at (425) 235-3438 or Chinookdog@earthlink.net

Breed Summary and Physical Outlook

The first Chinook dogs were bred by Arthur Treadwell Walden in 1917 and resembled today's Mastiff type dogs. Those Chinooks were used to pull large loads over long distances and were known for their endurance. The contemporary Chinook still has many of the qualities of the old Chinooks. Although smaller in size, due to necessary inbreeding and out-crossing with other breeds such as Huskies and Shepherds, their purpose has generally remained the same, that of a working dog. We feel the Chinook is the all-purpose dog. Chinooks in the U.S. enjoying activities such as conformation, obedience, agility, winter dog sledding, summer rigging, Search and Rescue, Herding and most commonly, spending time on the sofa with family members. Many Breeders are striving to increase the size of today's Chinooks to regain the physical qualities of original Chinooks. Chinooks do come in a variety of shapes and sizes. There are Cross Breeding Programs in place in an effort to maintain diversity in the gene pool and to improve certain characteristics of the Chinook. Chinook Crosses are usually the result of a planned breeding with a purpose and this information should relate to them as well.

The average lifespan of the Chinook is 12 to 14 years.

The average Chinook has medium to large bone and a well-muscled appearance. The Chinook is double coated, having a thicker coat in cooler climates and a thinner coat in warmer climates. Most Chinooks have the traditional tawny coloration that varies in intensity, black and tan or white Chinooks are infrequently seen. The Chinook tends to blow coat twice a year and sheds minimally throughout the year. The ears can be dropped, pricked or helicopter and they can change position throughout the first year of life. The teeth should meet in a scissors bite. Like many Northern breeds some Chinooks may develop snow nose that tends to disappear during the warmer months.

The size of the male Chinook is generally between 24-28 inches tall and weights are expected to be in the 65-90 pound range, with some larger Chinooks being heavier adults. The size of the average female is anywhere from 21-25 inches tall and 45-70 pounds. The Chinook is a slow maturing breed that will not show full physical maturity until the third year of life and should remain rather lean until this time.

Temperament

Because the Chinook is a slow maturing breed, they will remain puppyish throughout the first years of life. The Chinook temperament is friendly and wonderful with children. Mature Chinooks are often reserved with new people and new experiences. Chinooks should never be aggressive. The Chinook is very (emotionally) dependent on it's owners and should live indoors with the family. Some suffer from separation anxiety when left alone for even short periods of time. Chinooks can be headstrong, early and continued obedience training is strongly recommended. Shyness is seen occasionally in this breed, early and continued socialization is strongly recommended. We urge you to further explain the importance of socialization and training to your client.

Health

Hip Dysplasia is seen rather frequently in this breed and is considered to be the largest concern among breeders. Chinooks do not tend to suffer from Hip Dysplasia to the extent that other breeds do and most do well into old age on supplements or medications. Most Chinook Breeders screen parents for Hip Dysplasia with the OFA and/or GDC and only breed dogs with passing hips and good hip health in the line. Most Breeders require their puppy owners to screen for Hip Dysplasia regardless of breeding potential. Some Puppies will be X-rayed when only a few months of age at the time of spay or neuter.

The results of the 1997-1998 Tuft's University Breed Health Survey, by Dr. Jerold Bell indicated the most common concerns in our breed at that time were:

- Hip Dysplasia
- Limited Gene Pool (results showed good diversity in our gene pool)
- Seizures/Epilepsy (no higher than the general population of dogs)
- Cryptorchidism

The report includes detailed information about known health conditions, or lack thereof, affecting the dogs that participated in the study. It is believed 49% of the total Chinook population participated. You can locate a complete copy of the Tuft's Study online at www.chinook-dogs.org/documents.

Stress Syndrome

A small percentage of the Chinook population has experienced odd 'seizure like' episodes of unknown etiology. It is most often associated with stressful situations, occurs mostly in older dogs but can be seen in puppies. The University of Missouri recently reported that it is "not certain that this is a seizure problem but may be something else." Research continues on this.

Symptoms most often associated with this syndrome are:

- Dizziness similar to motion sickness
- Cramping of the front feet and pawing at the air.
- Blank stare for less than a minute
- Wobbly walk

Unlike many canine epileptic seizures, these affected individuals mostly stay conscious, can be ambulatory and may 'snap out' of this syndrome in less than 30 seconds or respond to an owner's voice. A full blood panel is recommended. Several older dogs that were thought to have seizures were eventually diagnosed as being hypoglycemic. Many dogs outgrow this syndrome, while others may have a few episodes a month. At this time it is unknown what the cause of these symptoms are. So far, 100% of the Chinooks with these reported episodes have lived a normal life with no known side effects from this syndrome. A small percentage of the Chinook population has true canine epilepsy. In these cases most appear to respond to conventional therapy such as Phenobarbital.

Known triggers for these episodes are:

- Separation from owners such as being placed in a boarding kennel.
- Being the last dog fed in a multi-dog household. By feeding the Chinook with this syndrome before feeding the other dogs, this condition can sometimes be averted. At least one Chinook can be "triggered" in to this syndrome by purposely delaying feeding in a multi-dog household.
- Changes of living conditions, introduction of another dog in to the household.
- Being attacked by another dog.

Other Concerns

Vaccine reactions. Enough Chinook puppy owners and breeders have reported severe reactions, including anaphylaxis, that the removal of Leptospirosis bacterin from the puppy vaccination protocols warrants serious consideration. In almost all cases the Leptospirosis portion of the vaccine was suspect. Older Chinooks have been successfully vaccinated against Leptospirosis without the side effects seen in young puppies. Please consider this issue when starting a vaccination schedule on this puppy/dog. Many Chinook owners prefer to space apart vaccinations, avoid certain vaccinations (such as Lepto) or to run titers to develop their own schedule.

Dursban. Several anecdotal reports suggest that Chinooks have a higher than normal sensitivity to Dursban. A number of seizure-like episodes, vomiting and skin irritations have been reported in Chinooks that came in contact with this product.

‘Weak’ stomachs, general lack of appetite and suspected food allergies are common concerns among Chinook owners. Allergies to airborne pollens, insects, dust and molds have also been diagnosed in what is thought to be a small number of Chinooks.

Reporting Medical Concerns

This is a rare breed; therefore Chinook owners try to network for the sake of the breed. We ask that all owners donate their Veterinarian’s records to the CWW Health Committee to keep on file. Over time we will be able to see health trends in the breed. Our files will contain normal and abnormal test results and documentation on health issues affecting the breed. Our goal is to have information available that will assist other owners or Veterinarians. It may help as a starting point for another Chinook sharing the same symptoms or conditions. Please remind your client of this when you feel they have valuable information that could be shared with the CWW Health Committee.

Our club will occasionally present a health-related study or survey to all known Chinook and Chinook Cross owners. We seek the support and participation of as many Chinooks as possible. We ask for your assistance when your client is submitting data for a health study by offering inexpensive services.

All Chinook owners are asked to notify their breeder if a serious health condition is ever suspected or diagnosed.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this informational guide. Your new patient surely thanks you!

Sponsored by the Chinooks Worldwide, Inc. Health Committee
For more information please contact Cheryl Brown, Chinooks Worldwide Health Chairperson, at Chinookdog@earthlink.net or by writing to:

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