

## **MEDICAL CONDITIONS OF THE AKITA**

by Jennie Bullock

Below is a partial list of some of the medical complications that can be found in Akitas. A good Akita will exhibit none of these conditions. A poorly bred Akita will exhibit some. As with any breed of dog, it is important that you take your time, buy a quality dog from a reputable breeder.

Good nutrition for an Akita is a meat based food with high quality protein, especially fish. The origin of the Akita is Japan where rice, fish and sea plants are a diet staple and an ideal diet for the Akita. They should be fed two meals daily. Dry food should be soaked until it has expanded prior to feeding.

Hip Dysplasia : Hip dysplasia can be a problem for all dogs, purebred and mixed breeds alike. It will continue to be a problem for a long time to come, so knowing as much as possible about it would be a wise course of action. When the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals first began the scanning x-rays to "certify " that the dog was free from dysplastic problems, this was done when the animal was twelve months of age. As time and research passed and was reviewed, it was discovered that changes took place within the joint after 12 months of age. So certification was granted to normal at twenty-four months of age. Common sense would dictate that you cannot assume that every certified dog will be normal for the rest of its life. Much depends on heredity, environment, diet and well being of the animal. For more information, please refer to the Medical Index([Hip Dysplasia](#)).

Entropion : Entropion is a condition that causes the lid of the eye to roll inward allowing the eyelashes to scrape the surface of the eyeball. This will, of course, cause irritation and in time, affect the eye if not treated. This is an inherited condition. One way that this condition is manifested is that a wet patch appears around the eye and the dog will paw at the eye. Sometimes only the lower lid is involved and in severe cases, both upper and lower lids are involved. Treatment by a veterinarian is mandatory.

Bloat : Bloat must not be ignored. If your dog looks "bulgy", is pacing with anxiety and drooling a bit, he cannot sit or lie down comfortably and is in general distress, get moving now, get to a veterinarian.

For more information, please refer to the Medical Index ([G.V.D. or bloat](#)).

Sedation : Akitas are extremely sensitive to sedation, in particular, anesthesia. Every year there are several Akitas that die when sedated for hip x-rays or surgery. Most deaths occur as a result of a combination of drugs. Acepromazine and suritol are safe enough to use independently. However, if combined, these drugs have resulted in death to the dog. The amount of the dosage must be carefully observed, no guess work should be used. It is imperative that you not overly tranquilize your dog in preparation for surgery. Allow your veterinarian to administer all pre-surgical medications. He will

know what medications he will be dealing with and the appropriate dosages that are required.

Epilepsy : Epilepsy is considered to be an inherited problem in several other breeds (i.e. Shepherds, Setters, Poodles, Saint Bernard's, German Shorthair Pointers, as a few). This disease cannot be cured but it can be controlled with medication. The dog can live a fairly normal life, but cannot be placed in the stressful situation of showing, and certainly should not be bred.

For more information regarding epilepsy, please refer to the Medical Index ([epilepsy](#)).

Progressive Retinal Atrophy : P.R.A. is not common in any breed of dog, but none the less, it does exist. This situation is not reversible; there is no doubt that the dog will eventually become blind. For more information, please refer to the Medical Index ([P.R.A.](#)).

Hypothyroidism: This disease affects 70% of the breed. A simple blood test will determine the existence of the condition. The symptoms can include skin and coat problems, sudden onset of aggressive behavior, itching, lethargy, musky odor, and many more to keep it simple. More information may be found in the Medical Index ([Hypothyroidism](#)).

Sebaceous adenitis: This is a skin condition where the lubricating glands cease to function. Hair falls out in great quantities; musky odor, flaking and thickening of the skin are some of the symptoms. Information on this condition may be found in the Medical Index([Sebaceous adenitis](#)).