



Recommended testing for diseases of the American Staffordshire Terrier

NCL-A Cerebellar Ataxia test: This test is mandatory for all dogs prior to breeding. CA is an autosomal recessive disease (see chart). Affected dogs suffer death of brain cells in the cerebellum causing multiple neurological symptoms which often lead to euthanasia. We are fortunate that a test was developed in 2008. All testing is done through Optigen Labs www.optigen.com using either a cheek swab or blood sample. It is important to understand that affected dogs (dogs carrying both copies of the CA gene) must NEVER be bred. Carriers (dogs carrying one copy of the diseased gene) must never be bred to each other because they will produce puppies that are affected with the disease.

Cardiac diseases: There are several cardiac diseases which may occur in the American Staffordshire Terrier. Among these diseases are mitral and tricuspid valve murmurs, subaortic stenosis, pulmonary valvular stenosis, and cardiomyopathy. All dogs to be used for breeding should be examined by a veterinary cardiologist for evaluation to determine if they are free of heart defects. If there is any doubt, a Doppler or cardiac ultrasound is recommended. The STCA does not recognize a cardiac exam conducted by a veterinary general practitioner to be a valid assessment.

Hypothyroidism (Autoimmune thyroiditis): This is a common disease in the AST and is often overlooked. There is a long list of symptoms associated with this disease – among them are chronic allergies and skin problems, coat changes and hair loss, behavioral changes, lethargy, weight gain,

seizures, anxiety, and many other symptoms. Symptoms can vary in each dog. Hypothyroidism is often underdiagnosed because veterinarians may check only T4 levels instead of ordering an entire thyroid panel which includes autoantibodies. We recommend annual testing with any of the approved Orthopedic Foundation for Animals www.offa.org laboratories including Dr. Jean Dodds lab, Hemopet www.hemopet.org We also recommend reading Dr. Dodds' book "The Canine Thyroid Epidemic". For more information you may also visit her FAQ page on the Hemopet website www.hemopet.org/FAQ.html

Hip dysplasia: Hip dysplasia is a common disease in which the hip joint and or socket are malformed. The joint does not function normally thereby causing pain and arthritis which can greatly affect the dog's quality of life. All dogs used for breeding should have a passing hip evaluation from either OFA or Penn Hip. Although not as common as hip dysplasia **elbow dysplasia** is also a concern and it is advisable to have elbows x-rayed also.

Eye diseases: Some eye diseases have been known to occur in the AST. Among these diseases are Progressive Retinal Atrophy, juvenile cataracts and entropion. CERF (Canine Eye Registration Foundation) www.vmbd.org is the organization which registers and records eye test results conducted by a veterinary ophthalmologist. Annual testing is recommended.

All breeding stock should be tested for the above diseases and the results recorded with OFA. When dealing with a breeder, prospective puppy buyers should obtain the AKC registered names of the sire and dam and look up test results on the OFA website www.offa.org We also encourage test results (either passing or failing) to be made available through the CHIC website www.caninehealthinfo.org

Ethical breeders will breed only healthy dogs with passing test results and a sound temperament. In addition they will divulge any other health information in their dog's background which is not available through testing. As there are other diseases which occur in the AST beside those we have tests for, one should inquire about longevity, incidence of cancer, cruciate ligament injuries or any other pertinent information.