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President's message



*Happy Thanksgiving to all of you!!
I am thankful we are all here, together in spirit and loving our westies and families and staying safe. We don't know what 2021 will bring, but I hope a safer environment to allow us to get together and enjoy our love of the breed and friends. Please enjoy your holiday season, even though it might be quieter than usual, and take care of yourself, your family and your westies.*



Our Spring Specialty and Sweepstakes is scheduled for April 2021 at Cal Expo in Sacramento. More information will be forthcoming as the date gets closer and we see what the government says about the reopening of our State Fairgrounds.

Dog DNA Testing: Why Genetic Screenings Can't Necessarily Tell You if Your Dog Will Get Sick—Yet

By [Mary Robins](#)

Apr 26, 2019 | American Kennel Club



It is the day every dog owner dreads: a bad diagnosis that drops out of the blue. These days, an increasing number of pet owners are using dog DNA tests to ward off this sudden heartbreak or help them diagnose existing symptoms. It's a tempting idea: just take a swab from your dog's cheek and send it to a lab, the logic goes, and a few weeks later, you'll know which diseases your dog is genetically at risk of developing, perhaps even before anything goes wrong.

It's so tempting, in fact, that dog DNA testing companies are proliferating, selling kits costing up to \$200 that test for genes associated with more than 160 conditions. But when it comes to predicting disease in dogs, experts in dog genetics and canine health are sounding the alarm about the limitations of DNA testing at its current stage of development.

Dog Geneticists Warn Dog Owners of the Limitations of DNA Testing

One of those experts is Dr. Elinor Karlsson, a professor at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and the director of the Vertebrate Genomics Group at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard. Dr. Karlsson has been working in canine genetics for many years and is excited about the work that's emerging, but until recently, she was unaware that some companies are already taking the field's research directly to pet owners.





“I hadn’t realized that they were using these tests in clinical medicine in the way that they were, and I was kind of shocked by it,” she says. “You know the research, and the research is good, but there are all these caveats on it, and all of a sudden you realize people are using it in a way where they’re not taking those limitations into account, to make decisions about people’s pets.”

What are those caveats? First and foremost, the research is still in its infancy. Scientists have been gathering information about which genes are associated with which conditions, but this is just the beginning of the process. Crucially, correlation doesn’t mean causation, so a gene that often occurs with a particular disease might not cause it. In order to establish causation, scientists need an awful lot of data—sometimes tens of thousands of test subjects.

That’s difficult to achieve even in human medicine. In canine medicine, there’s less funding and more genetic variability because there are so many breeds and crossbreeds of dog, so the research lags even further. “If you get back a positive test meaning that your dog is carrying a genetic variant that has been in a study correlated or associated with a disease,” Dr. Karlsson says, “The one question that you as a pet owner ask is, *What is the chance that my dog is going to get sick?* And that’s not a question that we can actually answer yet.”

What’s more, some of the companies selling direct-to-consumer tests don’t publish the methods they use to get their results. As the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Scientific Officer of the American Kennel Club’s Canine Health Foundation (CHF), Dr. Diane Brown has overseen the funding of much canine genetic research—and she stressed that peer-reviewed, transparent methodologies are key to good science. “When we’ve got our funded researchers, they publish their research so that everyone can look at it,” she says. “Their results are published in peer-reviewed scientific articles, which are accessible by the public and other scientists. This is how we build upon investments in research. So when you’ve got these closely held industry secrets and it’s proprietary methodology, it becomes very hard to evaluate.”





Then there's the difficulty of interpreting the results. Because so many tests are being sold direct to consumers, there is a need to help dog owners understand the complex information they're presented with. For example, some conditions are associated with multiple genes, but genetic testing companies might only test for one of those genes. This might result in pet owners falsely believing their canine companions have the "all clear" from a certain condition. What's more, veterinarians may not have the expertise to interpret and act upon a panel of genetic tests.

All this has very real consequences. There's already been at least one case of pet owners having their dog put to sleep on the basis of genetic test results that might have been misinterpreted or over-interpreted. And that's to say nothing of the unquantifiable level of worry, heartbreak, and sometimes false confidence these tests might stir.

The Present and Future of DNA Testing for Dogs

For all these limitations, there's tremendous value in the emerging science around dog genetics, and a lot to be excited about. In particular, breeders are already using peer-reviewed, high-quality genetic research, with the aim of reducing or even someday eliminating certain conditions from the breeding pool.

For instance, Dr. Diane Brown talked of the solid science that identified the DNA behind exercise-induced collapse (EIC), a genetic condition that causes dogs to lose control of their muscles after intense exercise. A test for this condition now allows breeders to check whether a particular dog has the gene before breeding them. There's been similar success with a test for copper toxicosis in Bedlington Terriers, a condition in which the liver doesn't process and expel copper, leading to illness and death.

But the use of genetic testing to decide whether to breed particular dogs is very different to using these tests in clinical medicine. In clinical medicine, the question is not whether a particular dog's genes should be carried to the next generation, but rather concerns the fate of an existing dog—decisions too serious to be left to science that's only part of the story.



All the same, geneticists are clear on one thing: we're on the cusp of a true treasure trove of genetic information about dogs and humans alike. Within ten years, Dr. Karlsson hopes that tests will be able to show which dogs are at high risk of developing serious conditions such as heart disease and certain cancers, allowing their owners to establish suitably healthy lifestyles and implement a regime of X-rays or other screening tests early, to optimize the dog's chances of living a long and happy life.

But it's important to remember that the science isn't fully there yet.

How to Approach DNA Testing for Dogs—the Experts Advise

Dr. Brown also urges dog owners to consider genetic testing as just one tool in their toolbox. Anyone thinking about getting a new dog, or working to take the best possible care of their current dog, should educate themselves, she says, by reading the [breed information on AKC.org](#) and by checking the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals' (OFA's) [CHIC \(Canine Health Information Center\) Program](#), which recommends screenings for particular breeds.

"You need to look at the overall health of the dog that you're thinking about," she says. "What did [the pedigree](#) look like? What did the parents look like? What did the siblings look like? Do that sort of homework. What is required to be tested in that particular breed? I think that making decisions on the health and breeding of a particular dog needs to go far beyond just a single reference point and far beyond a single test. It needs to be looking at the dog as a whole."

Dr. Karlsson adds that, though canine genetic testing for health must currently be taken with a grain of salt, dog owners themselves can help move the field along, by supplying some of the data scientists need. "We need to know when a dog is carrying a variant that's been associated with a disease, do they get sick or don't they get sick? That's what we need to figure out, and that has to be a collaboration with dog owners."

Working together with the AKC Canine Health Foundation to participate in peer-reviewed, [humane research studies](#) for the health of dogs. and submitting samples to OFA CHIC are ways to help. Another way to help is to sign up for Dr. Karlsson's citizen-science project, [Darwin's Ark](#), and [submit your dog's genetic information](#).

The sooner scientists can access the information they need, the sooner we'll arrive at the day so many dog owners are waiting for: a day when comprehensive genetic screenings can keep beloved pets healthy for [as long as possible](#).





Thanksgiving with Dogs: 20 Dos and Don'ts for Pet Owners

By
[Latasha Doyle](#) Top Dog Tips Nov 13, 2018

When guests are coming to town and festivities are planned, it's important to remember that your dog needs special attention to make his holiday enjoyable and hazard-free. Keep it safe and make it fun for your dog this Thanksgiving with these dos and don't for pet parents.

Very soon your home will be filled with family and food. You'll be watching a [Thanksgiving Dog Show](#), having a meal with your loved ones, cooking delicious meals for them and some [homemade Thanksgiving treats](#) for your dogs. But, Holidays can also be very hectic, and they can be extremely stressful for pets. Of course you'll want to focus on your guests, but you can't forget about your pup and his needs.

You may even be traveling with your dog for the holiday, which can lead to a whole other list of safety concerns. No matter how you're celebrating this Thanksgiving, be sure you're paying just as much attention to your Fido as you do every other day of the year.





Making Thanksgiving Fun

DO supervise children at all times with your dog. While your nieces and nephews may be delighted with your pet and are trying hard to be gentle, many of them (especially those who are less familiar with pets, and your dog in particular) may be unintentionally rough or handle your dog in a way that bothers him. For everyone's safety and comfort, make sure that your dog isn't left unsupervised with children.

DON'T expect more of your dog than he can handle. For a dog who's used to spending a significant amount of time alone, or just with your family, it may be overwhelming to find himself in a room full of chattering relatives and active children. Find time to let him be alone if you possibly can so that he doesn't panic.

DO consider setting up a special room for your dog to play in during the meal. You'll be busy refilling drinks, carving the turkey, clearing away plates, and slicing pie. You'll have a much easier time without your dog trying to get your attention the entire time.

Set up a comfortable bed or crate, your dog's favorite toys, and perhaps try some relaxing music. Test this ahead of time to make sure that it doesn't have the opposite effect and make your dog bark.

DO include your dog in the sporting activities. While everyone's tossing around the football, you can engage your pooch with a frisbee or rubber ball. Make sure to get one that's hard enough to bounce, but soft enough to be safe for his teeth and jaw.

DO get your dog a special toy to enjoy while your guests are talking and watching television. To make it extra special, pick a Thanksgiving themed toys for your pup. If the dog prefers a favorite toy or game that you already have, make sure to get it out



for him to play with. This can be a stressful time for him and you want him to be aware that you know he's doing his best.

DO make the time for a walk or a game of fetch, especially if the weather's good. After a hearty meal, some exercise will be just what your dog needs to recharge. It's also a good idea to wear your dog out in the morning before guests arrive so he won't be as tempted to jump on everyone who walks through the door.

DON'T let your dog snack all day long. Even if the treats are healthy, your dog can get pretty sick if he has too much to eat. Instead, get him a dental chew or an interactive toy to keep him busy while everyone else is watching a movie.



Dog Food Safety

DO ask your guests (or relatives) not to sneak your dog food from the table. You've already made plenty of Thanksgiving appropriate foods for your pet, so use that.

DON'T expect your dog to entertain himself when the counter tops are covered in tempting food. Locking him in another room while delicious aromas waft his way will make him over-excited and frustrated. Instead, find a friend or family member to play with him while you're finishing up the details of the big meal.

DO prepare your dog something he really enjoys. There are hundreds of ideas online for homemade Thanksgiving dinner for dogs you can cook while preparing food for your guests. If you need some inspiration, check out these [Thanksgiving doggy dinner recipes](#) with healthy ingredients that are likely around on that day.



DO give your dog his special meal before everyone else sits down at the table. This way his tummy will be full and he'll be less tempted to beg for scraps.

DO keep your dog entertained while everyone else is feasting with a toy that hides a treat, a food-filled KONG, or a long-lasting stuffed bone.

DON'T give your dog table scraps. It is frequently bad for dogs and can make them ill very quickly. Some things you'll want to avoid, particularly common Thanksgiving foods that will around on the day but should be kept away from your dog:

- Rich, fatty foods like turkey skin and gravy
- Filling from the turkey like onions and sage
- Grapes, raisins, and currants
- Nuts, especially macadamia nuts
- Chocolate
- Alcohol
- Coffee

DO feel free to offer your dog limited options from the Thanksgiving table that are good for him, including:

- Skinless, boneless cooked turkey
- Steamed, plain green beans
- Steamed, plain carrots
- Plain mashed sweet potato, pumpkin, or butternut squash
- Gravy free of onions, spices, herbs, and sweeteners

DO watch out for non-food (or non-edible) hazards that he may be able to reach, like the following common Thanksgiving items:

- Baking strings – used to secure the turkey and can cause obstructions if your dog gets a hold of them.
- Cooked turkey bones – can splinter, causing your dog serious problems that may require surgery or could even cause death.
- Corn cobs – can be a major choking hazard for your dog.



- Holiday decorations – very dangerous for dogs; flowers can be ingested, candles can fall and start a fire, and flameless candles with batteries can be swallowed. It's fine to enjoy holiday decor, but make sure that it's out of the reach of your pets.
- Turkey brine – should be discarded immediately after use. This salty, sugary solution may make your turkey moist and juicy, but if your dog drinks it he can get salt toxicosis, which results in brain swelling.

DON'T leave trash cans open. Open trash cans are an easy target for your dog to get into trouble quickly. Even a small dog can knock an open trash can over and get themselves into trouble quickly. Close all trash cans and take tempting-smelling trash out of the room where your dog will be spending time so they don't paw it all day long.

DO keep your vet's phone number and the Pet Poison Helpline number close at hand in case an accident does occur. You won't want to spend a single second looking it up if your pet is in trouble.



Annual Awards

If any of your dogs have earned any AKC titles since November 2019, please send the name of the dog, title earned, date of title, owner, and mailing addresss to David Snook at David_Snook@att.net by December 1, 2020. We will include the information in the next edition of the Tartan and David will have an annual award made for you.



We wish to take this opportunity to honor our wonderful four-footed friends who have crossed the Rainbow Bridge.

For future issues, we ask that you send your memorials to us at:

Lisa.blutman@aol.com or lblutman@gmail.com

Please send a photo, birth (an estimate is fine if you don't have the exact date) and passing date along with a short note to include in the memorial.

Litter Listings:



If you have a litter, we would love to see the puppies here.



SAN FRANCISCO BAY WEST HIGHLAND WHITE TERRIER CLUB

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Westie Rescue and Placement of Northern California (WRAP) Liaison: David and Linda Snook

Please consider volunteering your time by serving on one of the Club's committees. Volunteering is a great way to meet new people and to help shape the future of our organization. If you are interested, please contact Lisa Blutman. We need assistance with Programs, Assistant Web Master, Special Events.



2020-21 Club Events

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
Supported Entry for Shows Held	September 19 & 20, 2020	Show Canceled
Fall Specialty and Sweepstakes And Banquet Dinner	October 24, 2020	Show Canceled
Supported Entry for Show Held	October 25, 2020	Show Canceled
Holiday Luncheon and Party	December 5, 2020	Event Canceled
Annual Meeting	January 2021	Date and Location TBD
Spring Fun Event	March 2021	Date and Location TBD
Spring Specialty and Sweepstakes	April 16, 2021	Cal Expo Center, Sacramento

Visit us online at <http://www.sfbaywestieclub.com> for the latest news and updates!

The HIGHLAND TARTAN is published at least four times per year in March, June, September and December. We encourage any Club Member or Subscriber to submit articles or information which they feel would be of interest to the Club. Please send material of interest to the Editor by the first day of the month of publication. All materials are published at the discretion of the Editor. Opinions are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Bay West Highland White Terrier Club. Send materials for publication to *(insert current editor's contact info)*

When submitting information for an ad, please have it camera ready. Indicate the size (full or half

page) and mark the areas to be used for written copy. Copy should be typed to size on white paper. Your photos and copy will be returned, if requested.

Subscriptions cost \$15.00 per year. Advertisement costs for a Full Page: \$20.00; Half Page: \$10.00; Business Card size: \$15.00; for 4 issues.

Whelping Box: List litter announcements in the Tartan: Number of dog and bitch puppies, sire, dam, whelp date and owners. \$5/ issue, members only.

Please make **check Payable to SFBWHWTC**. Payment must accompany advertisement. Send subscription requests to SFBWHWTC, and mail to: *(insert current Treasurer's mailing address)*

THE HIGHLAND TARTAN IS THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY WEST HIGHLAND WHITE TERRIER CLUB.

