

Patellar Luxation In Miniature Pinschers

I have provided a list of the most recent dogs who have been screened for patellar luxation using the Putnam System. It is very encouraging to see how many dogs have now been screened, with the vast majority having a score of 0:0. There are still a lot of breeders, not always members of the Club, who are stating on their websites that their breeding stock is screened and clear but who have not submitted their results to me for inclusion on the database. In these cases, if asked for my opinion by a potential puppy buyer, I usually say that there is no reason why any breeder should not let the results go to the database - they do not have to be members of the Min Pin Club to take part in the screening scheme - and if they say the dog is clear, but have not let me have the results there is always doubt as to the truth of what they are claiming.

Recently I have had 'conversations' with pet breeders on social media sites trying to persuade them to have their breeding stock screened but have usually met with the attitude that their dogs are fine so why should they bother - despite my efforts and those of Club Committee members on these pages, they cannot be convinced.

More worryingly I have spoken to pet owners who have taken their backyard bred Min Pins to vets who have diagnosed slipping patella's in dogs whose owners had not seen any kind of lameness. These are usually puppies under 9 months old and in at least two cases the Putnam score according to the owner was 1:1 yet surgery was performed on puppies between 6 and 8 months old. Far be it from me to disparage my own profession, but I can only blame ignorance or greed for this speedy surgery. It is possibly due to the fact that insurance companies will sometimes only pay for surgery if it is done within a stated time of the diagnosis being made, so that if a loose patellar is noticed in a young dog there is a rush to operate in case the company refuses to pay up. In my opinion a puppy with a score of 1:1 should not be operated on but should be exercised to build up muscle and reassessed at a year of age when most have much more stable joints. If the owner has not noticed any lameness the puppy does not need surgery then, or maybe at all.

Generally, there is a huge improvement in the state of our breed as far as patella testing - 20 - 30 years ago it was not uncommon to see Min Pins hopping and skipping across the show-ring, often with scars where they had been repaired!

This is probably a good time to explain again how the Putnam system works as I am aware that some individuals in this breed and others have claimed that we should be taking x-rays or even scanning stifles to screen our breeding stock.

The Putnam system is a screening system which enables us to find out if and how badly individual dogs are affected.

The system grades the joints as follows:

0 = Unable to luxate the patella using gentle finger pressure

1 = Patella luxates under pressure but slips straight back into place when pressure is removed

2 = Patella slips out easily under pressure but can be replaced manually and then stays in place

3 = Patella is out of the groove most of the time but can be replaced temporarily

4 = Patella is always out of the groove and can't be replaced

Grades 0 - 2 don't often need surgery but 3 does and 4 is beyond conventional surgery.

The Putnam system identifies whether or not a problem exists in the dog and gives a good idea how serious the problem is and whether surgery will be needed. Other methods such as X-rays and CT or MRI scans usually need either sedation or anaesthesia which makes the procedure more expensive. In my view these further tests are only useful to assess what sort of surgical procedure is required to sort out the problem.

Some other breed clubs are asking for these procedures to be done, and especially in brachycephalic breeds, this is putting owners off the whole idea as they are worried about the risks and the costs.

The Putnam system gives us a very good idea as to the general state of the breed - x-rays etc give an idea of the condition of the joints of the individual dog who needs surgery.

Putnam testing is cheap and easy - a form can be downloaded from the Club website, together with guidance notes for the veterinary surgeon who performs the test, which can be done during a routine consultation or booster.

I am more than willing to chat to any vet if they are unsure how to do the test - there is never any need to attempt to force the patella out of place!

Hope this helps - I am always there to talk about this anytime - just not when I am in the ring with my dog!

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