

Health Matters!

Schnauzer Health Survey 2009/2010 analysis

Thanks to everyone who completed a Health Survey form early this year. The response was excellent, with a total of 570 respondents sending details of 734 Schnauzers (Schnauzers 72/118; Minis 358/422; Giants:140/194). Some people may think that the number of dogs may look small by comparison to the UK dog population as a whole, but as a percentage of our 3 sizes, it was really an extremely robust sample.

Minis at 422 look tremendous against 94 Giants and 118 Schnauzers but, because of the much, much smaller populations of the two larger sizes, their figures are actually better – in percentage terms.

Overall, the results compare very favourably to the KC/BSAVA survey of 2005 which had much lower responses from both Giant and Schnauzer owners (G: 69/113; S: not sufficient to record separately! Minis 289/586 – a lower response but reporting on more dogs).

The average age of dogs reported on were: Schnauzers 6 years (youngest 1yr/oldest 13); Miniatures 7 years (youngest 1yr/oldest 18); Giants: 5 years (youngest 1yr/oldest 15). According to the KC/BSAVA survey results, *'all dogs average life span'* is 11 years 8 months; Minis reported 12 years 1 month and Giants 10 years (Schnauzer response was not recorded).

The Schnauzer Breeds Survey results clearly show that all three sizes are in a healthy condition.

The total response for the 3 sizes split 33.9% males to 66.1% females (Schnauzers 46%/54%; Minis 29%/71%; Giants: 34%/66%) and most dogs are vaccinated annually (77%) although Giants are better at 84%. However, 8% of Giant owners claim they never vaccinate!

95.5% of all respondents reported their Schnauzers as 'healthy' (G: 88%; Schnauzers 96.6%; Minis 98.6%)

Some 95.6% of all respondent dogs receive some form of medication against parasites annually (G: 94.8%).

Owners reporting 'general health defects' show relatively small percentages with any 'problem', (not surprising when 95.5% report 'healthy' dogs) with only 7.5% of respondents say their Schnauzer has any 'defect'. Why the difference, I hear you ask, as these two figures add up to over 100%. Well, the 'general' defect may not affect the health of the dog. Specific Giant health 'defects' included retained testicles (6.3%); teeth - unspecified (4.74%); blindness (1%). The breed split of respondents answering this question (same sort of responses) was G: 12%; S: 17.8%; M: 6.6%. The next question covered *'chronic problems that is distressing or affects its health & welfare'* with owners of all three sizes' highlighting specific conditions, some of which were mirrored in one or other of the other two sizes.

For example, in Giants, epilepsy was quoted by 5.3% of respondents, hypothyroidism at 3.68%, heart condition (unspecified) 3.2%, Cancer (unspecified) 3.2%, bladder weakness 2.1%, arthritis 2.63% and autoimmune problem 2.63%.

Cancer was also highlighted in Schnauzers (5%) Heart (3.4%); epilepsy was reported in Minis but at 1% and 'grouped' Gastrointestinal problems (number of conditions quoted) at 4.5%.

Only 7.9% of Giant owners highlighted unusual or undesirable behaviour problems in the breed (compared to Schnauzers (6.8%) or Minis (16.1%).

In Giants, 'aggressive' and 'timid' behaviour received the same percentage (2.1%) and 'destructive' was reported by 4.2%. This was not too dissimilar to Schnauzer owners.

The main difference between the breeds on this question was simply that 4.5% of Mini owners reported their dogs to be 'noisy' – sounds like a typical Mini to me!

What conclusions can be drawn?

Whatever the results, we have to remember this is only our first survey, so we will use it as the basis for measurement against future surveys (the next one may well be launched in our next newsletter – so make sure you complete it again).

General observations must be, as stated earlier, that the breed (all three sizes) appears to be in a good state of health and, so long as breeders continue to be responsible and careful, then there is every hope that that position can be retained.

The Health Representatives of the UK Schnauzer Clubs will be analysing the survey further and discussing any action that should be considered for the future. Of particular relevance will be how our Schnauzer Breeds Survey results measure up against the KC/BVA analysis of conditions found in all breeds (those figures based on responses from 36,006 live dogs).

That survey produced a tabulated analysis of the prevalence of a condition in all breeds and any significant variance to those figures should be carefully assessed.

These figures would indicate that we should be investigating more carefully, any reported incidence of epilepsy and cancer in Giants for example, which show up in our Schnauzer Breeds survey at 5.3% and 3.2% respectively (against the KC/BSAVA survey 'norm' of 2.6% and 1.79%). Schnauzers' results too should be investigated for Cancer, with our survey showing the incidence in that size at 5%. There are other conditions of which we may need to be more aware and, as information becomes available to the Breed Health Co-ordinators, this will be shared with breed enthusiasts in all three sizes.

In the meantime, if you didn't complete a Health Survey form and would still like to, you will find the existing form on the Club's website. Don't worry about the closing date as all responses continue to be analysed fully. It is important that everyone who did complete a form also takes part in the next survey – this is the only way we can track any condition which breeders should be addressing, to ensure that the healthy state of our breeds continues to reach the high levels shown by our survey.

The key finding, we should all be delighted with, is that 95.5% of all responses clearly said that 701 out of 734 dogs were perfectly healthy. Let's keep it that way

Once again, our thanks for taking part and look out for the next survey, which should be launched in the Spring SAGA, although the new form should be up on our website in early January 2011.

Tony McDermott