

What you should know about Syringomyelia (SM) and Chiari-like Malformation (CM)

What is CM SM?

A malformation of the skull which is too small, and of the brain, which is too big and squashed and pushed out the back of the dog's skull into the vertebral canal.(CM) This blocks the normal flow of fluids in the brain and spinal cord so that cavities develop called syrinxes which affect the nervous system(SM). A syrinx can develop as young as 3 months or more slowly over a period of years. CM/SM is rarely fatal but can be increasingly painful and debilitating. Suffering is such that affected dogs may need surgery or early euthanasia.



How do I know if my dog has it?

Many dogs never show signs but could be a 'carrier' passing on this serious condition to offspring. Others may only show discomfort on occasions such as pain on jumping or be unwilling to exercise. However in some dogs the pain is severe and they may have a twisted back or walk with a characteristic scratching movement. The only way to confirm diagnosis is an MRI. (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)

Is it a problem in particular breeds?

CMSM has been shown to be inherited and has been most researched in Cavaliers and Griffons. However it is also found in King Charles Spaniels, Yorkshire Terriers, Maltese, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, Boston Terriers, Miniature Dachshunds, Miniature/toy poodles, Chihuahuas, Bichon Frisé, Pugs, Shih Tzus, Pomeranians, Papillons, French Bulldogs a Pekingese, a miniature Pinscher and several Cross Breeds. Research is looking for the genes that cause it. Dr Rusbridge at the Stone Lion Veterinary Hospital, UK, is the leading neurologist involved. She suggested breeding guidelines which have been recognized by the *British Veterinary Association and the Kennel Club and used in a proposed MRI scheme to reduce the incidence of inherited CM and SM.

Do I have to do anything?

Yes – because it is impossible to get rid of this painful condition unless EVERYONE helps the breed. Breeders have particular responsibility for health. It is devastating to worry and watch a much loved pet suffer and your dogs may inadvertently be contributing.

- You need to get an accurate diagnosis of whether your breeding dog is affected or not. There is going to be a new BVA/KC* scheme for MRI testing with universal standards.
- Do not breed from any dog that has symptoms.
- Ideally only breed with dogs that do not have SM at 2.5 years but mildly affected dogs can be used if mated with a dog that is unaffected.

If I use the breeding guidelines will I get rid of CMSM in my lines?

Because SM can develop after a dog is used for breeding, breeding clear to clear may produce affected offspring but breeding affected to affected almost certainly will. Until the gene/s are found it isn't possible to get rid of the condition entirely.

How can I help research?

It's simple, join the group who MRI their breeding dogs
Contact Dr Clare Rusbridge
www.veterinary-neurologist.co.uk

Syringomyelia

DNA

Research



Do you need support with your dogs' diagnoses? Do you need someone who will listen?

contact **Rachael Harvey (mob. Tel 07915 067198)**

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