

THE BRITISH VETERINARY ASSOCIATION/KENNEL CLUB/INTERNATIONAL SHEEP DOG SOCIETY (BVA/KC/ISDS) EYE SCHEME

What is the Eye Scheme?

The BVA/KC/ISDS Eye Scheme is based on eye examination and is a means of identifying inherited and non-inherited ocular conditions in dogs. The majority of dogs presented for examination under the Eye Scheme are pedigree dogs with known inherited diseases of the eye, but it is important to emphasise that all dogs, including Crossbreds, can be examined under the Scheme. This approach reassures breeders that the dogs they are to use for breeding have healthy eyes and the inclusive approach means that new and emerging problems are more likely to be recognised. The aim of the Eye Scheme is to reduce or eliminate the incidence of inherited eye disease.

BVA produces the Scheme's procedure notes which set out the rules and regulations under which the Scheme operates and all the information needed to use the service. Information includes those breeds and conditions with known (Schedule A) or suspected (Schedule B) inherited eye disease, as well as the fees charged (Schedule C) and the list of BVA appointed eye panellists who conduct the eye testing.

In general, the best age for the first eye test and issue of a certificate of eye examination is after the dog has reached one year of age and before it is used for breeding and in many breeds of dog annual eye testing is recommended to ensure that later onset inherited conditions are not missed. In some breeds with eye conditions that are present at the time of birth, or soon afterwards, it is sensible to carry out litter screening when the puppies are between five and twelve weeks of age in addition to examination and certification when the dog is older.

What conditions and breeds are specified?

The conditions specified are those of the eye itself and not, for example, those involving the eyelids, or those relating to tear production and drainage. This means that eyelid problems such as entropion, ectropion and distichiasis (extra eyelashes) are noted in the middle section of the certificate and not the bottom section where the inherited eye disease status is recorded. In part this approach is needed because evidence of inheritance for these disorders is incomplete and their complex nature is acknowledged, however, comments made in the middle section of the certificate will summarise their significance, especially so if they may be a cause of discomfort or reduced vision.

The breeds specified are those in which hereditary eye conditions are known or suspected. The specified breeds and conditions are updated annually.

What are Schedules A and B?

Schedule A lists the **known** inherited eye diseases in the breeds where there is enough scientific information to show that the condition is inherited in the breed and often what the mode of inheritance is. For the breeds in Schedule A the Certificate of Eye Examination is issued with results for each inherited condition of '*affected*' or '*unaffected*' and these results are recorded and published by the Kennel Club. Schedule B lists those breeds in which the conditions are, at this stage, only **suspected** of being inherited and therefore are listed as '*under investigation*'.

The reason for having the '*under investigation*' Schedule B list is to alert breeders and panellists to potential problems and enable information to be collated and analysed quickly. It would be wrong to put breeds and conditions on Schedule A without proper evidence, especially as some of the problems investigated do not turn out to be hereditary after all.

Who decides when a breed or condition is added to Schedules A or B?

BVA appoints an Eye Panel Working Party (EPWP) made up of experienced veterinary ophthalmologists. They meet at least twice a year and make the final decisions on what breeds and conditions will be included in the Scheme. Amendments to the procedure notes come into effect on January 1st each year, so it is important to check whether new breeds or conditions have been added. The KC and BVA notify breeds clubs, breeders and veterinary surgeons respectively of the changes as appropriate.

How does a breed or condition qualify for inclusion in the Scheme?

There are a number of ways in which information on eye conditions is provided to allow the EPWP to evaluate the quantity and quality of findings and this information may come from a variety of sources, including veterinary surgeons, geneticists, Breed Clubs, as well as research institutions and publications. For inclusion of conditions in Schedule B (under investigation) dogs, ideally in large numbers, will usually be presented by breeders for examination, even though the breed is not listed in the Schedules. Sometimes potential inherited ocular conditions are first identified in the veterinary surgery and often a breed club will have gathered information on pedigrees or problems in related dogs in the UK and in other countries. By whatever routes the information becomes available, if it is sufficient to suggest an emerging inherited eye disease, the condition is placed on Schedule B.

For a condition to be classed as Schedule A (certifiable) scientific evidence of the inherited nature of the condition in a breed is required and so the criteria for inclusion have to be much stricter. The amount (quantity) and reliability (quality) of information is important and often there will need to be good quality (usually peer reviewed) published data available either in the UK or abroad. Breeds and/or conditions are usually moved from Schedule B to Schedule A as a consequence of the information collated and analysed by BVA and the EPWP.

How do I get my dog's eyes tested?

There is a list of BVA appointed eye panellists who can issue certificates under the Scheme and you can make an appointment with them directly or through your own veterinary surgeon. Often breed clubs will arrange for a BVA panellist to attend a specially arranged eye testing session or to examine eyes as part of an organised dog show. This arrangement allows many dogs to be examined on one occasion and may save time and money. You must have the relevant KC or ISDS owner registration document with you in order to present your dog for an eye test under the Scheme. If your dog is permanently identified (by microchip or tattoo) the veterinary surgeon may wish to verify the number (by scanning the dog) and recording the identification number on any certificate issued. Wherever possible, you should also provide any previous eye certificates issued for your dog.

What should I do if I want to breed from my dog?

It will be necessary to get the latest information on the conditions relevant for your breed. Make sure that the dog and bitch to be mated have current eye certificates showing them to be unaffected for the inherited conditions relevant to the breed. As most conditions have to be certified each year, certificates should not usually be more than one year old. The Kennel Club publish all results of Schedule A breeds and will be able to tell you over the telephone of any dog's current result, providing you know that dog's KC Registered Name and/or Number.

Can I do any more to help the breed?

Yes. In addition to your dogs being regularly eye tested under the Scheme you could ask your breed club what they are doing for the breed. The KC works closely with breed clubs and often a geneticist or eye panellist with a particular interest in that breed or condition may be assisting a breed club. Obviously, wherever possible, you should not breed from a dog that is affected with a hereditary eye disease, or has any suspected inherited eye disease.

Where can I get more information?

The Scheme's procedure notes and other free leaflets can be obtained from:-

British Veterinary Association, 7 Mansfield Street, London W1G 9NQ Telephone: 020 7908 6380

Library information and current eye test results for KC registered dogs can be obtained from:-

The Kennel Club, 1-5 Clarges Street, London W1Y 8AB Telephone: 0870 606 6750

Or by visiting www.the-kennel-club.org.uk