

Your Cocker Spaniel

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



PET MEDICAL CENTER

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Your Cocker Spaniel

Cocker Spaniels: What a Unique Breed!

Your dog is special! She's your best friend, companion, and a source of unconditional love. Chances are that you chose her because you like Cockers and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Outgoing and friendly personality
- Mild-mannered and easy to get along with
- Energetic, active, and athletic
- Well suited as a companion, family dog, or working dog
- Obedient and devoted
- Good with children

However, no dog is perfect! You may have also noticed these characteristics:

- Coat needs to be cared for frequently to prevent matting and tear staining
- Can be aggressive, fearful, or snappy if not socialized properly
- Can be difficult to housetrain
- Needs daily exercise
- Prone to separation anxiety and associated barking and chewing behaviors
- Sensitive, matures slowly

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's full of personality, and you love her for it! The Cocker Spaniel is a joy to be around and makes a gallant family member.

One of America's favorite breeds, the Cocker Spaniel is a happy family companion. The Cocker's roots date back to the mid 1800s when they were used for flushing woodcocks from foliage for hunters, the job for which they were named. Today, she enjoys lounging on the couch with her owners rather than hunting, but squirrels should still be on alert since she enjoys a good chase! Her coat is long and beautiful, but does require frequent grooming. She's



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General Health Information for your Cocker Spaniel

Dental Disease

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your Cocker Spaniel is more likely than other dogs to have problems with her teeth. Dental disease starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't prevent or treat dental disease, your buddy may lose her teeth and be in danger of damage to her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, your Cocker Spaniel's life span may even be cut short by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.

Infections

Cocker Spaniels are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections — the same ones that all dogs can get — such as parvo, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through vaccination, which we will recommend based on her age, the diseases we see in our area, and other factors.

Obesity

Obesity can be a significant health problem in Cocker Spaniels. It is a serious disease that may cause or worsen joint problems, metabolic and digestive disorders, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal food when she looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can "love her to death" with leftover people food and doggie treats. Instead, give her a hug, brush her fur or teeth, play a game with her, or perhaps take her for a walk. She'll feel better, and so will you!

Parasites

All kinds of worms and bugs can invade your Cocker's body, inside and out. Everything from fleas and ticks to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, heartworms, and whipworms can get into her system in a number of ways: drinking unclean water, walking on contaminated soil, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your canine friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventive medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

Spay or Neuter

One of the best things you can do for your Cocker is to have her spayed (neutered for males). In females, this means we surgically remove the ovaries and usually the uterus, and in males, it means we surgically remove the testicles. Spaying or neutering decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to identify and address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. For example, if your pet needs hip X-rays or a puppy tooth extracted, this would be a good time—it's more convenient for you and easier on your friend too. Routine blood testing prior to surgery also helps us to identify and take precautions against

moderately sized and adaptable—she's a great urban dweller or country companion. The Cocker Spaniel is a generally healthy breed with an average lifespan of 13-16 years.

Your Cocker Spaniel's Health

We know that because you care so much about your dog, you want to take good care of her. That is why we have summarized the health concerns we will be discussing with you over the life of your Cocker. By knowing about health concerns specific to Cocker Spaniels, we can tailor a preventive health plan to watch for and hopefully prevent some predictable risks.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they are related to your pet's breed. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we've described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed. That does not mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that she is more at risk than other dogs. We will describe the most common issues seen in Cocker Spaniels to give you an idea of what may come up in her future. Of course, we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide contains general health information important to all canines as well as the most important genetic predispositions for Cocker Spaniels. This information helps you and us together plan for your pet's unique medical needs. At the end of the booklet, we have also included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Cocker looking and feeling her best. You will know what to watch for, and we will all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.



occur in dogs. They range in severity from very mild to very severe. Many times a pet seems normal until a serious injury occurs or surgery is performed, and then severe bleeding can result. Von Willebrand's disease is a blood clotting disorder frequently found in Cocker Spaniels. We'll conduct diagnostic testing for blood clotting times or a specific DNA blood test for Von Willebrand's disease and other similar disorders to check for this problem before we perform surgery.

Eye Problems

Not many things have as dramatic an impact on your dog's quality of life as the proper functioning of his eyes. Unfortunately, Cocker Spaniels can inherit or develop a number of different eye conditions, some of which may cause blindness if not treated right away, and most of which can be extremely painful! We will evaluate his eyes at every examination to look for any signs for concern.

- Glaucoma, an eye condition that affects Cocker Spaniels and people too, is an extremely painful disease that rapidly



leads to blindness if left untreated. Symptoms include squinting, watery eyes, bluing of the cornea (the clear front part of the eye), and redness in the whites of the eyes. Pain is rarely noticed by pet owners though it is frequently there and can be severe. People who have certain types of glaucoma often report it feels like being stabbed in the eye with an ice pick! Yikes! In advanced cases, the eye may look enlarged or swollen like it's bulging. We'll perform an annual glaucoma screening to diagnose and start treatment as early as possible. Glaucoma is a medical emergency. If you see symptoms, don't wait to call us, go to an emergency clinic!

- Cataracts are a common cause of blindness in older Cockers. We'll watch for the lenses of his eyes to become more opaque—meaning they look cloudy instead of clear—when we examine him. Many dogs adjust well to losing their vision and get along just fine. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight may also be an option.
- Dry eye, also known as keratoconjunctivitis sicca or KCS, is common in Cocker Spaniels. KCS reduces the amount of fluid produced by the tear glands such that they are no longer able to keep the eyes moist. This results in sore, itchy eyes and infections. Symptoms of KCS include a dull, dry appearance or thick discharge from the eyes, squinting, and pawing at the eyes. KCS is a painful condition; please call us immediately if you notice any of these signs, and we'll conduct a tear test on your pet. If he has this disease, we'll prescribe ointment that you'll need to apply for the rest of your dog's life.

Heart Disease

Cocker Spaniels are prone to multiple types of heart disease, which can occur both early and later in life. We'll listen for heart murmurs and abnormal heart rhythms when we examine your pet. When indicated, we'll perform an annual heart health check, which may include X-rays, an ECG, or an echocardiogram, depending on your dog's risk factors. Early detection of heart disease often allows us to treat with medication that can prolong your pet's life for many years. Veterinary dental care and weight control also go a long way in

preventing heart disease.

- Cocker Spaniels are especially prone to a life-threatening heart condition known as dilated cardiomyopathy, or DCM, in which the heart becomes so large, thin, and weak that it can no longer effectively pump blood to the body. As this problem advances, your pet may act weak or tired, faint or collapse, breathe in a labored way, or cough. We'll conduct a yearly electrical heart screening (ECG) and/or an echocardiogram to look for abnormal heart rhythms as early as one year of age. If indicated, treatment includes medication and dietary supplementation.
- Cockers are susceptible to a condition called patent ductus arteriosus, or PDA, in which a small vessel that carries blood between two parts of the heart does not close as it should shortly after birth. This results in too much blood being carried to the lungs, causing fluid build-up and strain on the heart. Outward signs may be mild or severe, including coughing, fatigue during exercise, weight loss, shortness of breath, and weakness in the hind limbs. We listen for a specific type of heart murmur to diagnose this problem during your pet's examinations. If your pal has this condition, we may recommend surgery to close the problematic vessel..

Epilepsy

There are three types of seizures in dogs: reactive, secondary, and primary. Reactive seizures are caused by the brain's reaction to a metabolic problem like low blood sugar, organ failure, or a toxin. Secondary seizures are the result of a brain tumor, stroke, or trauma. If no other cause can be found, the disease is called primary or idiopathic epilepsy. This problem is often an inherited condition, and Cocker Spaniels are commonly afflicted. If your friend is prone to seizures, episodes will usually begin between six months and three years of age. An initial diagnostic workup may help find the cause. Lifelong medication is usually necessary to help keep seizures under control with periodic blood testing required to monitor side effects and efficacy. If your dog has a seizure, carefully prevent him from injuring himself, but don't try to control his mouth or tongue. It won't help him, and he may bite you accidentally! Note the length of the seizure, and call us or an emergency hospital.

Multiple Skin Problems

Your Cocker is susceptible to various kinds of skin infections and diseases. One type, *Malassezia* dermatitis, is caused by a kind of yeast. When this yeast infects the ears, it causes itching, redness, and an accumulation of brown, waxy discharge. On the skin, this yeast leads to greasy, hairless areas, especially on the neck and throat, with a characteristic odor. Another common skin disease called seborrhea can cause dry, flaky skin or greasy, oily skin. Skin diseases make your pet itchy and uncomfortable. Bathing with special shampoos and rinses may be helpful, and we'll treat any underlying problems such as allergies as well. The earlier you call to have your pet's skin problems checked, the less likely you will end up with an itchy, bald, smelly dog. The healthcare chart included in this care guide lists the specific skin problems your pet may encounter.

Cancer

Cancer is a leading cause of death in older dogs. Your Cocker will likely live longer than many other breeds and therefore is more prone to get cancer in his golden years. Many cancers are curable by surgical removal, and some types are treatable with chemotherapy. The healthcare chart included in this care guide lists the specific cancers your pet may encounter. Early detection is critical! We'll perform periodic diagnostic tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet.

Thyroid Problems

Cockers are prone to a common condition called hypothyroidism in which the body doesn't make enough thyroid hormone. Signs can include dry skin and coat, hair loss, susceptibility to other skin diseases, weight gain, fearfulness, aggression, and other behavioral changes. We'll conduct a blood test annually to screen for this disease. Treatment is usually as simple as replacement hormones given in the form of a pill.

Taking Care of Your Cocker Spaniel at Home

Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch her diet, make sure she gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush her teeth and coat, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see "What to Watch For" below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for her. This is when we'll give her the necessary "check-ups" and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Cockers. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures she will need throughout her life and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your Cocker live longer, stay healthier, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine.

- ✓ Supervise your pet as you would a toddler. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as necessary. This will keep her out of trouble and away from objects she shouldn't put in her mouth.
- ✓ Brush her coat as needed, at least weekly.
- ✓ Cocker Spaniels often have serious problems with their teeth, so you'll need to brush them at least three times a week!
- ✓ Clean her ears weekly, even as a puppy. Make sure to keep her floppy ears dry. Don't worry—we'll show you how!
- ✓ She is well suited to apartment life as long as she is given daily walks and short play sessions.
- ✓ She is a sensitive dog and doesn't do well with harsh training methods or punishment; always end training on a positive note.

- ✓ She's a smart dog with lots of energy, so keep her mind and body active, or she'll get bored. That's when the naughty stuff starts.
- ✓ Keep your dog's diet consistent and don't give her people food.
- ✓ Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
- ✓ Exercise your dog regularly, but don't overdo it at first.

What to Watch For

Any abnormal symptom could be a sign of serious disease or it could just be a minor or temporary problem. The important thing is to be able to tell when to seek veterinary help and how urgently. Many diseases cause dogs to have a characteristic combination of symptoms, which together can be a clear signal that your Cocker Spaniel needs help.

Office calls

Give us a call for an appointment if you notice any of these types of signs:

- ✓ Change in appetite or water consumption
- ✓ Tartar build-up, bad breath, red gums, or broken teeth
- ✓ Itchy skin (scratching, chewing, or licking); hair loss
- ✓ Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- ✓ Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes

Emergencies

Seek medical care immediately if you notice any of these types of signs:

- ✓ Scratching or shaking the head, tender ears, or ear discharge
- ✓ Inability or straining to urinate; discolored urine
- ✓ Cloudiness, redness, itching, or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- ✓ Gums that are a color other than bright pink
- ✓ Coughing, exercise intolerance, rapid breathing at rest
- ✓ Slow or stunted growth; sometimes seizures after eating
- ✓ Any abnormal shaking, trembling, or excessive involuntary tremors
- ✓ Dull coat, hair loss; sluggish, weight gain



Genetic/DNA Testing

DNA analysis is a rapidly advancing field in healthcare for people and pets. Luckily, technologies exist to screen for hundreds of inherited diseases in pets, just like in people. By screening each pet for as many genetic diseases as possible, we will be better prepared to care for your pet throughout life. This is an important step in caring for your pet because it's always better to know your pal is at risk for a genetic disease before the problem is untreatable.

In an effort to screen for as many genetically linked diseases as possible, we may recommend the **K9Genetics™ Disease Screen** to screen for more than 150 genetic mutations that cause disease.

Each **K9Genetics™ Disease Screen** Screens for

- ✓ Over 30 Musculoskeletal Problems
- ✓ Over 30 Metabolic Conditions
- ✓ Over 30 Eye Conditions
- ✓ Over 25 Blood and Clotting Disorders
- ✓ Over 10 Immune System Diseases
- ✓ Over 10 Urinary Tract Problems
- ✓ 10 Skin and Hair Conditions
- ✓ Cancer
- ✓ Dental Disease
- ✓ Drug Metabolism
- ✓ Heart Problems
- ✓ Hormonal Conditions
- ✓ Liver/Gastrointestinal Diseases
- ✓ Midline Defect
- ✓ Neuromuscular Diseases
- ✓ Reproduction Problems
- ✓ Respiratory Conditions

This one-time test is one of the best decisions you can make for your Cocker's medical care. With less than a few drops of blood, we'll have a lifetime of information to assist us in providing the very best care of your friend's unique and individual needs throughout her life!

For more information about genetic testing, visit <http://www.k9genetics.com>

Your Cocker Spaniel counts on you to take good care of her, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that she lives a long and healthy life. Our goal is to provide the best health care possible: health care that's based on her breed, lifestyle, and age. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns:

Pet Medical Center
254-690-6769

References:

Puppy to Adolescent Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Cocker Spaniel Healthy <i>Puppy to Adolescent: Infant to 17 in</i>		Age	Services We'll Provide	Cocker Spaniel-Specific Problems We're Looking For
			8 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Blood disorder evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care
○	10–12 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Blood disorder evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss caring for your dog's teeth and ears at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Patent Ductus Arteriosis (PDA) and Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Seborrhea von Willebrand's disease (vWD) 	
○	14–16 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Schedule spay/neuter surgery Discuss obedience and grooming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Patent Ductus Arteriosis (PDA) and Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Seborrhea von Willebrand's disease (vWD) 	
○	4–6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Bone and joint exam Blood disorder evaluation Pre-surgical diagnostics Spay/neuter surgery Discuss microchipping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Patent Ductus Arteriosis (PDA) and Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Seborrhea Patellar luxation and Hip dysplasia von Willebrand's disease (vWD) 	
○	6 months through 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Bone and joint exam Neurological assessment Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss lifetime genetic considerations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Patent Ductus Arteriosis (PDA) and Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Seborrhea, Allergies, and Ear infections Patellar luxation and Hip dysplasia Epilepsy von Willebrand's disease (vWD) <p>All major diseases important in the breed with diagnostic plan</p>	

Adult to Golden Years Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Cocker Spaniel Healthy		Age	Services We'll Provide	Cocker Spaniel-Specific Problems We're Looking For
		years through 6 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts, Glaucoma, and Keratoconjunctivitis sicca (KCS) Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA), Portosystemic shunt (PSS), and Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM) Seborrhea, Allergies, and Ear infections Hypothyroidism and Chronic hepatitis Patellar luxation, Hip dysplasia, and Intervertebral disk disease (IVDD) Epilepsy von Willebrand's disease (vWD) and Immune-mediated hemolytic anemia and immune-mediated thrombocytopenia (IMHA/ITP)
Adult: 18 to 39 in People Years	○	7 years through 9 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts, Glaucoma, and Keratoconjunctivitis sicca (KCS) Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA), Portosystemic shunt (PSS), and Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM) Seborrhea, Allergies, and Ear infections Hypothyroidism and Chronic hepatitis Patellar luxation, Hip dysplasia, and Intervertebral disk disease (IVDD) Epilepsy Melanoma and Lymphoma von Willebrand's disease (vWD) and Immune-mediated hemolytic anemia and immune-mediated thrombocytopenia (IMHA/ITP)
Senior: 40 to 59 in People Years	○	10 years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts, Glaucoma, and Keratoconjunctivitis sicca (KCS) Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA), Portosystemic shunt (PSS), and Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM) Seborrhea, Allergies, and Ear infections Hypothyroidism and Chronic hepatitis Patellar luxation, Hip dysplasia, and Intervertebral disk disease (IVDD) Epilepsy Melanoma and Lymphoma von Willebrand's disease (vWD) and Immune-mediated hemolytic anemia and immune-mediated thrombocytopenia (IMHA/ITP)
Golden Years: 60+ in People Years	○		Skin and coat exam Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam	
			Neurological assessment Cancer screen Blood disorder evaluation	
			Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss behavior and nutrition	
			Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being	

Note: We recommend twice-a-year examinations so that we may diagnose problems sooner. This approach also gives you the budget-friendly option of spreading preventive testing over two visits rather than one.