

Dach-Facts: Lafora Disease in MWHD

Health & Welfare Information from the
Dachshund Breed Council



What is Lafora Disease?

Lafora Disease is an inherited form of epilepsy that affects a small, but so far unknown proportion of Miniature Wirehaired Dachshunds.

The condition typically only becomes apparent any time from the age of 5 onwards and can take the form of major fitting, jerking of the head, apparent blindness, dementia and unsteadiness on the feet. It can affect both dogs and bitches.

Dogs that are "Affected" by the disease or are "Carriers" of the genetic mutation, are at risk of producing more "Affected" puppies if they are bred from with others carrying the mutation.



This information sheet has been written in conjunction with **Laforadogs**, a support group dedicated to helping owners of affected dogs and working to eradicate this distressing condition.

Could your Mini Wire Dachshund be affected?

Myoclonus (jerking) is a feature of the disease and characteristically this can be induced by flashing lights, sudden sounds and movement, especially when close to the dog's head. Generalised or complex partial seizures may be seen in some dogs. The disease progresses slowly over many years and gradually other neurological symptoms such as ataxia, blindness and dementia occur.

The genetics of Lafora

The Toronto Hospital for Sick Children, with support from Dr. Clare Rusbridge in the UK, has identified Lafora as an inherited autosomal recessive disease. It appears likely that canine Lafora first appeared in the Mini Wire Dachshund population in the UK as the result

of a genetic mutation. This means that a dog must have two of the mutated genes, one from each parent, to be clinically "Affected".

If a dog has only one Lafora gene, it will be a "Carrier". It will not be clinically affected by the disease but, if bred to another "Carrier" or "Affected" dog, at least some of the puppies born will receive the two genes and thus be clinically affected. There is more information on genetics at www.laforadogs.org.

At the moment, a DNA test is available in Canada, but can only differentiate between "Affected" and "Unaffected" dogs. It cannot distinguish between "Carriers" and "Clears".

The benefits of testing

The Wirehaired Dachshund Club (WHDC) hopes to test enough dogs to help identify the incidence of "Affected" dogs in the Mini Wire population. Based on the results, the Club will then take a decision on supporting development of a test to identify "Carriers" and "Clear" dogs.

The parents and offspring of any dogs identified as "Affected" by the current test would be known to be either "Affected", or "Carriers".

Dogs known to be "Affected" or "Carriers" should not be mated together. Avoiding such combinations will reduce the incidence of Lafora Disease.

Advice for Owners of MWHD

The demands on responsible dog breeders grow ever greater, but it is imperative that we all focus on improving the chances that the puppies we breed will live a long, happy and healthy life, giving their owners the best possible dog-owning experience.

If you have a Miniature Wirehaired Dachshund and are considering breeding now or in the future, it is important that you get your dog

Dach-Facts: Lafora Disease in MWHD

Health & Welfare Information from the
Dachshund Breed Council



tested. Even if you don't intend to breed, it is still important to have the test. That way, if the worst happens and you find your dog is affected, you'll be prepared and can take action to reduce the impact on your dog. You'll also be able to advise the breeder of your dog, so that they are aware of the implications and can advise other puppy owners.

The Wirehaired Dachshund Club (WHDC) is co-ordinating a testing programme and you should contact them to find out the most up-to-date information.

Contact Lesley Patton:
lpatton@lesandnic.fsnet.co.uk.

The origins of Canine Lafora

Canine Lafora was first identified by Dr. Sue Fitzmaurice in 1996. Later, Dr Clare Rusbridge another UK-based veterinary neurologist recognised a number of Mini Wires, many of whom shared common pedigrees, as having the Lafora symptoms.

Sue and Clare subsequently collaborated with Dr. Berge Minnassian and his team at the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children in Canada on a research programme using samples from these Mini Wires to develop a better understanding of Lafora in teenage human children.

Where to find out more

Visit www.dachshundbreedcouncil.org.uk for the latest Dachshund health and welfare information and advice.

For information on Lafora, visit:

www.laforadogs.org

Phone: 07764 355153

E-mail: laforadogs@btinternet.com

Laforadogs Support Group

On their website you will find:

- Information on the disease and the genetics behind it
- Advice on how to manage and cope with a dog suffering from Lafora's
- Advice on diet and medication
- The latest information on opportunities to have dogs tested



We are grateful to the Laforadogs Support Group for their help in producing this leaflet and to Dr. Clare Rusbridge for the information she has provided on the disease, its causes and her advice on breeding it out of the MWHD population.