

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 during the dog's breeding life, combined with a final check 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 'clinically affected' or 'clinically 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 British Veterinary Association, Kennel Club and International Sheep Dog Society 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. Analysis of data from the eye certificates also leads to identification of emerging conditions which may then be added to Schedule B.

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. Note, however, that there is no sliding scale of fees for gonioscopy which is separate from routine eye examination. **All dogs must be permanently identified (by microchip or tattoo) before examination and certification and the identification will be verified prior to the examination and the identification number recorded on the certificate issued.** Puppies presented for litter screening do not require PI at present. You must have the relevant KC or ISDS owner registration document with you in order to present your dog for an eye test and certification under the Scheme. Wherever possible, you should also provide any previous eye certificates issued for your dog. It is possible for dogs without permanent identification (PI) to be examined, but this should be arranged through a referral consultation and will be outwith the Scheme; therefore no certificate will be issued and the fee will be determined by the individual Ophthalmologist.

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 many 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. Results for ISDS registered dogs are published by the ISDS and any inquiries relating to ISDS registered dogs should be directed to the ISDS.

Can I do any more to help the breed?

Yes. In addition to your dogs being regularly eye tested under the Eye Scheme you could ask your breed club or society what they are doing for the breed. The KC and ISDS work closely with breeders and often a geneticist or eye panellist with a particular interest in that breed or condition may be assisting a breed club or society. 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, without discussing the situation with an expert.

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

Or visit www.bva.co.uk/chs and link to Canine Health Schemes

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: 0844 4633 980

Or visit www.thekennelclub.org.uk/doghealth

International Sheep Dog Society, Clifton House, 4a Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3NF

Telephone 01234 352672

Or visit www.isds.org.uk