Tests for Hereditary Diseases in Sighthounds

Tests for Hereditary Diseases in Sighthounds: Genetic and Physical

Fortunately, sighthounds are generally a healthy breed. However, there are certain health issues that every potential owner should be aware of before acquiring one. PRA (progressive retinal atrophy), patellar luxation, alopecia, dental problems, and broken legs are not uncommon. Responsible breeders do their best to minimize the risk of health problems in their lines. Thanks to science, tests for many hereditary diseases are now available.

For sighthounds, two physical tests are highly recommended:

- Patellar Luxation
- General Eye Health Check (ESVO)

These tests are performed by certified veterinary experts on dogs over 14 months old but are most informative when done at an older age, after 3-4 years.

Currently, genetic tests for four hereditary diseases have been developed for sighthounds:

- Familial Enamel Hypoplasia of Italian Greyhounds (FEH)
- Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA-IG1)
- Primary Closed Angle Glaucoma (PCAG)
- Primary Lens Luxation (PLL)

These tests can be done even at a young puppy age (when a DNA sample can be taken) and are valid for the dog's lifetime, as the genome does not change throughout life.

The most comprehensive set of genetic tests for sighthounds is offered by the US Davis laboratory. This is where we test our dogs.

Important! When ordering a PRA test, ensure it is specifically designed for sighthounds, as there are about a dozen different PRA tests for various breeds.

Familial Enamel Hypoplasia of Italian Greyhounds (FEH)

This hereditary genetic disease affects the dental enamel and is found in sighthounds. It is characterized by thin enamel that easily chips and discolors. Often, the teeth are unusually small, pointed, and prone to increased spacing with age. It is estimated that 14% of Italian Greyhounds suffer from FEH, and 30% are carriers.

FEH follows an autosomal recessive inheritance model.

Primary Closed Angle Glaucoma (PCAG)

Primary closed angle glaucoma (PCAG) is a hereditary condition resulting from a rapid increase in eye pressure, causing loss of optic nerve function and retinal ganglion cells. The onset is sudden, painful, and if untreated, will lead to blindness. The average age of dogs at diagnosis is 3.9 years (ranging from 0.5 to 6 years).

PCAG follows the same autosomal recessive inheritance model as FEH.

Primary Lens Luxation (PLL)

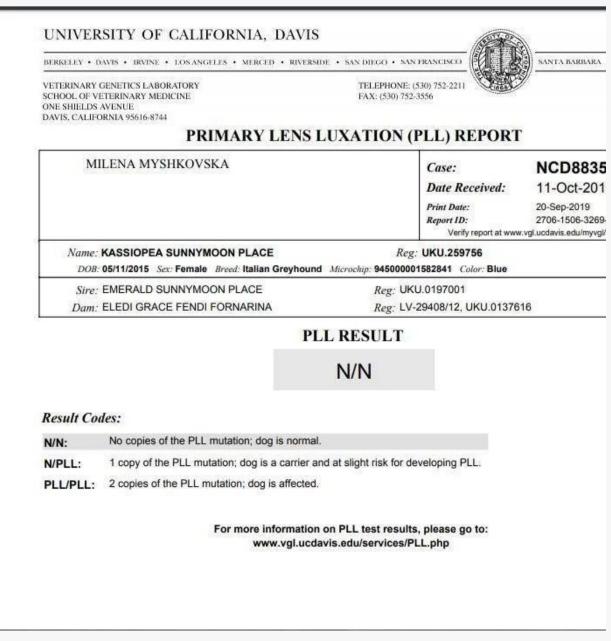
Primary lens luxation (PLL) is a painful hereditary eye condition where the lens shifts from its normal position, causing inflammation and glaucoma. PLL results from a single base change mutation in the ADAMST17 gene. If untreated, it can quickly lead to blindness. PLL usually occurs spontaneously between 3-8 years, although both eyes may not be affected simultaneously. Watery, red, and teary eyes may indicate lens dislocation requiring veterinary intervention. Dogs with only one copy of the mutation typically show no signs of the disease but may occasionally develop PLL.

The PLL mutation is widespread among terrier breeds, and genetic testing is recommended for this group. PLL is also known to occur in several other breeds, including sighthounds.

PLL follows the same autosomal recessive inheritance model as FEH.

These are all the currently known breed-specific genetic tests for sighthounds. We conduct these tests on all our sighthounds at the US Davis laboratory. Results can be seen on the dogs' personal pages and in the Breed Archive.





Sources:

- "Italian Greyhound Health Panel" article by US Davis Veterinary Genetics Laboratory
- "Primary Lens Luxation (PLL)" article by US Davis Veterinary Genetics Laboratory

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website.