

Health Committee recommendations to SCOA board members and the Code of Conduct Committee

SCOA (Spinone Club of America) and the health committee recommend that all members of SCOA participate in efforts to assess and improve the health of the individual dog and of the Spinone breed. This includes, but is not limited to, participation in valid, reliable and responsible testing/evaluation for potential hereditary diseases, providing samples when relevant and information for development of hereditary disease tests. Sharing health information openly provides the best possible means by which to enhance the welfare of all Spinoni. To this end, it is recommended that all health information be made available in a health database that is accessible to all members. An assessment of suitable databases is ongoing.

A minimum baseline assessment (health, temperament and conformation to the Breed Standard) is recommended for all Spinoni, and in particular, any breeding stock. SCOA recommends that members assess whether prospective breeding candidates and their immediate relatives are affected with, or are carriers of, hereditary disease. Prospective hereditary diseases may include, but are not limited to, orthopedic disease including hip and elbow dysplasia, ocular disease, thyroid disease, cardiac disease, and neurologic disease including cerebellar ataxia (CA) and epilepsy. As a minimum evaluation, members who breed their dogs are expected to obtain radiologic evaluation for hip and elbow dysplasia (OFA, Penn Hip, OVC, BVK, and FCI are acceptable organizations for scoring orthopedic x-rays), and a yearly CERF (Canine Eye Registration Foundation) evaluation. Testing for CA is recommended following the guidelines of the ISCGB (Italian Spinone Club of Great Britain). CA carriers should not be bred to each other. The health committee advocates that guidelines of the specific agencies regarding breeding recommendation be followed. Their guidelines reflect current data and should represent the latest in empirical and experimental research. It is expected that all breeding will be done judiciously, and with the goal of improving the Spinone breed as a whole. To that end, dogs exhibiting unsound temperament, disqualifying hereditary defects as defined by the breed standard and those traits which negatively impact performance, longevity, or the gene pool of the Breed as a whole, should be eliminated from breeding programs whenever possible. The balance between significant improvement and significant detriment in any breeding program lies with the Breeder. Breeding choices should be made based on education, knowledge, and a thorough understanding of heritability of defects within the Breed, the lines, and the dogs being utilized in breeding programs.

It is the responsibility of all members, and in particular each and every breeder to see that the gene pool for the Spinone expands in such a manner that the summation of qualities of the breed is equal to or exceeds those of parent breed clubs elsewhere, improving the reliability of the breed with regard to issues of breed standard conformation, health, temperament and longevity.