

GENERAL HEALTH GUIDE

WHAT WE CAN CHECK AND LOOK FOR.....

We hope that the following health checks can help you. These apply to all dogs and bitches not necessarily just English Springer Spaniels. These checks are not intended to be alarmist in any way and are to be used as a guide. It sometimes helps Vets if you are able to give accurate descriptions of any problems that may arise and assists in their ability to prescribe the correct treatment as quickly as possible.

FOR ALL DOGS (*both male & female*)

Daily	Eyes	Look for the presence of <i>excessive</i> discharge or pus in the conjunctival sac (<i>corner of the eye</i>). Check that the cornea (<i>centre of the eye</i>) is clear and not cloudy, that the dog can see clearly. Sight can be checked readily by throwing a tit bit for the dog to catch.
	Faeces	Note consistency, colour. Check frequently. Look for undigested food, foreign bodies (<i>plastic bags, cardboard etc</i>)
Weekly	Ears	Check that there is no discharge or odour coming from the ear canal. Examine ear flaps for presence of wounds or swelling.
	Paws	Examine for wounds, cracks, cysts between the toes and nail bed infections
Monthly	Skin/coat	Look for areas of thickened skin and baldness, particularly on elbows and hocks. Check for evidence of excessive scratching and the presence of abrasions. Test skin's mobility. Look for worm segments under the anus. Check whole body for new warts, lumps under the skin etc. It is a good idea to chart these on a sketch of the dog's outline so that you can monitor their rate of growth.
	Claws	Check nail-beds for signs of inflammation. Examine claws For length and presence of splits. Don't forget the dew-claws - if there are any.
	Teeth	Check the teeth and mouth for dental decay, accumulation of tartar and inflammation of gums.
Annually		Visit veterinary surgeon for annual check up - discuss use 'booster' injections.

The following Check List is for BITCHES ONLY. Hormone levels in the bitch can go up and down like a yo yo, when the bitch is not spayed. On occasion, after having been in season, her body may tell her brain that she is expecting babies when in fact she is not. This can also happen when she has in fact been mated, yet has not conceived. This can sometimes result in problems and so it is a good idea to keep a watch out for any signs of change as listed below - this will always help Vets to determine the source of the problem if there is one.

It is preferable not to have a bitch spayed before her first season. The best time to spay a bitch, when making such a choice, is within 3 months of the 12th day of her last season. Some Vets believe that spaying a bitch will lessen the chances of her developing mammary cancer. Always discuss any kind of operation on your bitch with your Vet so that you can make an informed decision.

It is not always true to say that a bitch puts on weight if spayed. However, if the bitch continues to be fed similar amounts of food without comparable exercise after having been spayed, she may be prone to putting on the pounds. This is caused by her hormone levels being more balanced, thus making her more 'content' and less likely to burn off the calories in the same way as before she was spayed.

It is sometimes true that the bitch's coat can change texture once spayed - again the change in hormone levels can be the cause of this.

Daily	Urination	Note the frequency of urination and if possible the colour of the urine passed. More frequent squatting may indicate that the bitch is about to come into season or that there is an impending infection of the urogenital tract.
	Thirst	Try to gain some idea of how much water is being drunk. Excessive thirst may indicate impending pyometra (<i>womb infection</i>) diabetes or a urinary tract infection
	Behaviour	Take note of any abnormal behaviour that might indicate that the bitch is about to come into season, has a false pregnancy or the onset of some illness.
Weekly	Vulva	Look for wounds, signs of excessive licking or a discharge. Pay particular attention at the time the bitch is in season and for the following 3 months.
	Mammary	Look for the presence of milk by gently squeezing the Teats. Feel all the mammary glands for the presence of tumours (<i>lumps</i>) and record their size. It is particularly important to carry out this examination when the bitch is in season and weekly in the subsequent 3 months.

(Bitches are usually in season for 21 days. They ovulate (ready to conceive) on average around the 12th day of their 'cycle' and if they conceive will be pregnant for approximately 63 days. This is why it is important to carry out these checks during this period. To understand the subject of mating and gestation better, you can consult a Vet or the breeder of your bitch).

ESS Club Web Page - Health Checks for Bitches only