

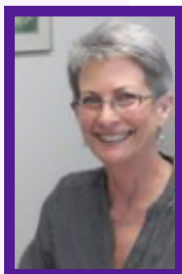
# THE SCOTTIE GUARDIAN

## Quarterly Newsletter of the STCA's Health Trust Fund

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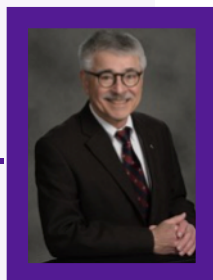
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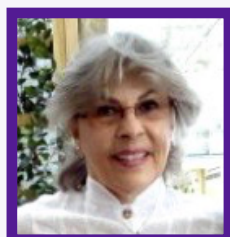
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Welcome to 2024's Issue #2 of *The Scottie Guardian*, the quarterly e-Newsletter of the Health Trust Fund of the STCA!

In this issue:

- Can we help our Scotties to have longer and healthier lives? Read about the Dog Aging Project from Editor Fran Sanden, and learn how we can contribute to the understanding of genetic and environmental factors to enhance healthy aging in dogs;
- Does your Scottie have an early stage gallbladder mucocoele? If so, and if you live near NC State University in Raleigh, NC, or Texas A&M Veterinary School in College Station, TX, there is a great opportunity for your dog. See the information and flyer included in this issue;
- Read about the CHIC Registry and some changes coming for 2025.
- And more from our Editor, Fran Sanden!

We welcome your suggestions and encourage submissions for the HTF Newsletter at any time. We hope that you will continue to enjoy our little newsletter with a big mission: to deliver the latest and best health info for your Scotties!

Marcia Dawson, HTF Chairman  
Hijinkscot@gmail.com



Be sure to visit the STCA webpage at [www.stca.biz](http://www.stca.biz) for more details on Health and the Health Trust Fund pages, including links to the ScottiePhile Health library and HTF donation pages.

# The Dog Aging Project

The Dog Aging Project is in trouble. Its funding is on the chopping block.

## ***What is the Dog Aging Project?***

It's a long-term biological study of aging in dogs with the help of citizen scientists.

## ***What are the Goals of the Project?***

To understand the genetic and environmental factors that influence the healthy aging in dogs.

## ***How is this Done?***

Through annual health assessments and fun activities that test cognition and mobility.

## ***Why is it in trouble?***

In 2018, the Dog Aging Project (DAP) received a 5-year grant from the National Institute on Aging, an NIH institute. However, it looks like a renewal of its grant did not receive enough positive reviews which means it's probably outside of funding possibilities.

## ***The Backstory:***

Founded in 2014, with a grant of \$200,000 from the University of Washington, the DAP subsequently received a 5-year grant from the National Institute on Aging for close to \$29 million dollars. Dog owners were asked to fill out questionnaires on their dogs' health to chart their pet's deterioration over time. Dogs will be followed for 10 years.

Based on the premise that dogs may be a better sentinel species for human aging than rats, for example, project coordinators cite the fact that dogs share many of the same health disparities as humans, including heart disease and dementia. Dogs share the same environment as humans and are routinely seen and evaluated by veterinarians.

All may not be lost, though. The leaders of the project have forged new partnerships, the latest of which is the Dog Aging Institute. Its mission is to help dogs and their human companions share happier, longer lives. If you're interested in supporting this initiative, visit the Dog Aging Institute at <https://dogaginginstitute.org/>.



# Landmark Dog Aging Study could provide clues about how our own aging works

A decade-long study of 10,000 dogs across the country hopes to answer questions about how humans age – and how we can do it better.

Author: Stephanie Wilson, Marcella Robertson, Haleigh Purvis

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POTOMAC FALLS, Va. — "I can't imagine my life without a dog, I just, I just can't," says Cindy McConnell.

For McConnell, dogs have always been constant companions in life – ever since she was a toddler. Sandy, the chihuahua-terrier mix. Buffy, the miniature poodle. Joshua, the Australian shepherd. Chermar Summerice, her first greyhound. "They're just pure love," McConnell says. "They, they really want to please their owner." It's a deep bond of unconditional love that McConnell treasures. She keeps pictures and memorials of all her furry family members in her home.

In 2018, she adopted Serena, a greyhound retired from a life of racing on the tracks. "She's this almost ethereal presence in my life," McConnell said. The greyhound is a calming presence that keeps McConnell happy and healthy. She wants that for Serena, too.

So, when she heard about the Dog Aging Project – groundbreaking research on human aging involving the study of dogs – she was excited to apply. The project is funded by a \$15 million grant from the National Institute on Aging (NIA) which is part of the National Institutes of Health.

"The Dog Aging Project came in as an innovative approach to understand this process of aging. Their aging process is so similar to ours, and in fact, they develop the same types of diseases humans do," said Dr. Francesca Macchiarini. Macchiarini is chief of the Biological Resources Branch in NIA's Division of Aging Biology, and the program official for the NIA grant that funds the Dog Aging Project.

Like humans, dogs can suffer from heart disease, cancer, diabetes and even dementia.

continued on next page...

Researchers from a dozen universities are hoping to recruit 100,000 dogs of all different breeds, ages, sizes and sexes from all across the country. From that pool, 10,000 will be picked to be tracked for a decade by scientists and veterinarians. The goal: To get a better understanding on how a dog's genetics, like a human's, impact aging.

“We're going to learn in a relatively shorter period of time than we would to study the human population, a lot about the impact of genes, the environment, life style choices on aging and the development of diseases,” Macchiarini said.

Investigators believe this project has the potential to identify genes in dogs that may be strongly associated with a particular condition, allowing vets to detect and treat diseases earlier.

"If we have concrete evidence, some concrete science that we can say these are factors that may ultimately impact the length of life, then maybe we can make changes in our lifestyle, changes in the environment so that we see that reflected in our pets' health," said Christine Klippen a veterinarian at Friendship Hospital for Animals.

"I'm excited to be a part of this groundbreaking study," she said.

Longitudinal Study of Aging in Dogs

- Goal is to understand the genetic and environmental factors that influence healthy aging in dogs
- Plan to enroll 10,000+ dogs



# Research News



## Calling all Scotties with a developing gallbladder mucocoele!

Liver disorders in our Scotties are nothing new to many owners, and disorders of the gallbladder are commonly diagnosed. Gallbladder disease is an important cause for elevations of liver enzymes and should be part of routine annual abdominal ultrasound exams in all Scotties.

Sometimes during an abdominal ultrasound, the veterinarian will mention “sludge” in the Scottie gallbladder. This may be an incidental finding and will be noted on the report. Other times, the sludge may be significant and may be a signal to change diet and possibly add some medications. However, when the veterinarian sees the distinctive pattern of a mucocoele on the scan of the gallbladder, things can get serious.

Gallbladder mucocoele formation is a disorder of the gallbladder where excess secretion of abnormally thick mucus results in obstruction to the normal flow of bile and possibly rupture of the gallbladder contents into the abdominal cavity. The only curative treatment for the disease is a costly surgery to remove the gallbladder, but this surgery is much more complicated in a dog than in people. Sadly, a high percentage of dogs undergoing this risky surgery will not survive the post-operative complications.

Scotties, among other breeds, are affected by gallbladder mucocoeles, and this disorder results in significant illness and a serious risk for mortality in our breed.

Jody Gookin, DVM, PhD at North Carolina State University and Kathleen Aicher, DVM DACVIM are collaborating on a study to determine if the course of mucocoele formation can be reversed with medical management by correcting the metabolic disturbances present in affected dogs. Using a prescription diet, specific medications and supplements to correct the imbalances, Drs. Gookin and Aicher will follow the dogs in this study for a full year, providing all food and medications as well as ultrasounds and blood work check-ups every three months.

Your Scottie may be eligible to participate in this AKCCHF funded study being conducted in two locations, NC State University and Texas A&M University.

**North Carolina State University Contact**  
Dr. Jody L. Gookin (Principal Investigator)  
(919) 513-6295  
Jody\_Gookin@ncsu.edu

**Texas A & M University Contact**  
Kathleen Aicher DVM, DACVIM  
Department of Small Animal Clinical Sciences, VMBS  
Texas A&M University; 4461 TAMU; College Station, TX 77843-4461.  
979-862-2861 kaicher@cvm.tamu.edu

**See Flyer below to determine if your Scottie qualifies for this important study!**

## Now enrolling dogs into a clinical study: **MEDICAL RESOLUTION OF GALLBLADDER MUCOCELE FORMATION**

**THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY** is to determine if daily supplementation with a mixture of vitamins, standard of care treatments, and feeding of a veterinary therapeutic low fat diet will result in resolution of gallbladder mucocele formation in dogs.

**TO QUALIFY FOR THE STUDY** dogs must be >6 kg body weight and diagnosed with a developing gallbladder mucocele with no ultrasonographic or bloodwork evidence of gallbladder rupture or biliary obstruction. Dogs cannot have any concurrent medical illnesses that would be expected to decrease the likelihood of 1-year survival, must be compliant with oral medications and must not have any food allergies, intolerances, aversions, or medical conditions that would preclude exclusive consumption of Royal Canin Gastrointestinal Low Fat dry or canned dog food for a duration of 1 year.

### **WHAT DOES THE STUDY ENTAIL?**

- ✓ Exclusive feeding of Royal Canin Gastrointestinal Low Fat dry or canned food with a 10% snack allowance for up to 1 year (paid for by study). Your dog's feeding plan will be prescribed and monitored by a veterinary nutritionist.
- ✓ Oral administration of up to 15 capsules of dietary supplements (vitamins and amino acids) per day (can be staggered) for up to 1 year (paid for by study).
- ✓ Complete a daily checklist documenting administration of diet and dietary supplements.
- ✓ Mandatory visits to the North Carolina State University Veterinary Hospital once every 3 months for 1 year for performance of an abdominal ultrasound examination and collection of blood, urine, and a fecal sample (paid for by study).

### **BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION**

This study is the first to attempt to medically reverse the course of mucocele formation in dogs. If the study is effective, your dog may achieve a partial or full remission of their mucocele formation. Through funding by the AKC Canine Health Foundation and donations from Royal Canin, participation in the study will generate approximately \$5,000 in cost savings by providing free prescription dog food, free medications, free abdominal ultrasound examinations, and free bloodwork over a period of 1 year.



### **TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS STUDY PLEASE CONTACT:**

Dr. Jody L. Gookin (Principal Investigator)  
(919) 513-6295  
Jody\_Gookin@ncsu.edu



## Changes Coming for CHIC in 2025

Starting January 1, 2025, there will be an update in the requirements for the CHIC Registry. The changes reflect the importance placed on available DNA tests by making the CMO required. Also, the HTF added other tests to the optional category to underscore the importance of these health issues in Scottish Terriers.

### Required Tests:

- vWD- DNA test from an approved lab and results registered with the OFA
- CMO- DNA test from an approved lab and results registered with the OFA
- Patellar Luxation- Veterinary evaluation and results registered with the OFA

### Optional Tests, (choose one):

- Autoimmune Thyroiditis Panel from an approved lab and results registered with the OFA
- ACVO Eye Examination and results registered with the OFA
- Serum Bile Acid Test from approved lab and results registered with the OFA
- Kidney Screen (Urine Protein:Creatinine Ratio) and results registered with the OFA
- Legg-Calve-Perthes, radiographs submitted to OFA for evaluation

Permanent identification in the form of a microchip or tattoo is required, as before.

Details on the procedures for these new tests are explained on the OFA website:

<https://ofa.org/diseases/>



## From Your Editor's Desk

Mom's been talking about the Dog Aging Project. I'm # 37,329 and am an active member of the pack. Mom didn't give you any statistics or activates; that's my job.

The latest newsletter, published just two months ago, lists a number of accomplishments. Here they are:

- 10 peer-reviewed articles published
- 526 citations
- 115 media articles
- 5 news broadcasts
- 10 podcasts

The DAP also has 1.79 followers on social media. That's a lot!

There are a bunch of activities that I can participate in, too. Some of them are:

- Cognitive games
- Measure my Dog
- Jog and Run
- Stair Climb

Study results. Woof, here are some of them:

- Lifetime prevalence of owner-reported medical conditions in the 25 most common dog breeds.
- Social determinants of health and disease in companion dogs, a cohort study.
- Development and Validation of a Novel Instrument to Capture Companion Dog Mortality Data.

