

# CHIC—The Canine Health Information Center

The Canine Health Information Center, also known as CHIC, is a centralized canine health database jointly sponsored by the AKC/Canine Health Foundation (AKC/CHF) and the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA).

## Mission Statement

*To provide a source of health information for owners, breeders, and scientists, that will assist in breeding healthy dogs.*

## CHIC Goals

- To work with parent clubs in the identification of health issues for which a central information system should be established.
- To establish and maintain a central health information system in a manner that will support research into canine disease and provide health information to owners and breeders.
- To establish scientifically valid diagnostic criteria for the acceptance of information into the database.
- To base the availability of information on individually identified dogs at the consent of the owner.

## CHIC Benefits

Once in place and accepted within the dog breeding community, the CHIC program offers benefits to breeders, buyers, parent clubs, and researchers.

- For breeders, CHIC provides a reliable source of information regarding dogs they may use in their breeding programs. In the future, breeders can begin to analyze the pedigrees of a proposed breeding for health strengths and weaknesses as well the traditional analysis of conformation, type, and performance strengths and weaknesses.
- For buyers, the CHIC program provides accurate information about the results of a breeder's health testing. For diseases that are limited to phenotypic evaluations, there are no guarantees. However, the probability that an animal will develop an inherited disease is reduced when its ancestry has been tested normal. Further, as more DNA tests become available and the results are entered into CHIC, the CHIC database will help breeders predict whether progeny will be clear, carriers, or affected.
- For parent clubs considering establishment of health databases on their own, CHIC provides the answer with no upfront investment required by the club. The CHIC infrastructure is supplied and maintained by the OFA. The data is maintained in a secure environment by trained staff. The services are not subject to the time, technology, and resource constraints that parent clubs might face on their own. This frees parent clubs to focus on the tasks of identifying health concerns, educating their membership, raising funds for research, and encouraging participation in the CHIC program.

- For researchers, CHIC provides confidential and accurate aggregate information on multiple generations of dogs. CHIC information will also be useful for epidemiological studies enhancing our knowledge of health issues affecting all breeds of dogs.
- For everyone interested in canine health issues, CHIC is a tool to monitor disease and measure progress.

## CHIC Policies and Guidelines

The CHIC database is a tool that collects health information on individual animals from multiple sources. This centralized pool of data is maintained to assist breeders in making more informed breeding choices, and for scientists in conducting research. In order for data to be included in CHIC, test results must be based on scientifically valid diagnostic criteria.

### **Breed Specific**

Core to the CHIC philosophy is the realization that each breed has different health concerns. Not all diseases have known modes of inheritance, nor do all diseases have screening tests. Some screening tests are based on phenotypic evaluation, others on genetic testing. With all these variables, a key element of CHIC is to customize or tailor the CHIC requirements to the needs of each breed. These unique requirements are established through input from the parent club prior to the breed's entry into the CHIC program. Breed specific requirements typically consist of the inherited diseases that are of the greatest concern and for which some screening test is available. Each parent club also drives specific screening protocols. As an example, one parent club may allow cardiac exams to be performed by a general practitioner. Another parent club may require the exam to be performed by a board certified cardiologist. A club may also use the CHIC program to maintain information on other health issues for anecdotal purposes. Later, as screening tests become available, the disease may be added to the breed specific requirements.

### **Identification**

Regardless of breed, each dog must be permanently identified in order to have test results included in CHIC. Permanent identification may be in the form of microchip, or tattoo.

### **Informed Consent**

CHIC operates an informed consent database. All information regarding test results remains confidential unless the owner specifically authorizes release of the information into the public domain. Owners are encouraged to release all test results realizing it is in the ultimate health interests of the breed and the information greatly increases the depth and breadth of any resulting pedigree analysis. For those not quite ready to accept open sharing of information, there is still value in submitting their results. All test information entered into the database is available in aggregate for research and statistical reporting purposes, but does not disclose identification of individual dogs. This results in improved information on the prevalence of the disease, as well as information regarding progress in reducing the incidence of the disease.

## CHIC Numbers and CHIC Reports

A CHIC number is issued when test results are entered into the database satisfying each breed specific requirement, and when the owner of the dog has opted to release the results into the public domain. The CHIC number by itself does not imply normal test results, only that all the required breed specific tests were performed and the results made publicly available.

A CHIC report is issued at the same time as the CHIC number. The CHIC report is a consolidated listing of the tests performed, the age of the dog when the tests were performed, and the corresponding test results. As new results are recorded, updated CHIC reports reflecting the

additional information will be generated. For example, if a breed requires annual CERF examinations, an updated CHIC report will be generated every time updated CERF results are entered. Another potential example is as new DNA tests are developed and added to the breed specific requirements, updated CHIC reports will be generated as the test results are entered.

Once included in the CHIC program, the breed specific requirements are dynamic. As health priorities within a breed change, or as new screening tests become available, the breed specific requirements can be modified to reflect the current environment. If the breed specific requirements are modified, existing CHIC numbers are not revoked. Again, the CHIC number is issued to a dog that completed all required tests at a given point in time.

CHIC will provide the parent club quarterly reports consisting of both aggregate numbers and specific dogs that have been issued CHIC numbers.

### CHIC Fee Structure

Test results from the OFA and CERF databases are shared automatically with the CHIC program. There is no fee to enter test results from either the OFA or CERF, and there is no requirement to fill out any additional forms.

To enter results into CHIC from another source such as PennHIP, OVC, or parent club maintained databases, there is a one time per dog fee of \$25.00. To enter results from any of these organizations, a copy of the test results, the fee, and a signed note requesting the results be entered into the CHIC database should be sent to the OFA. Any additional results after the one time fee is paid are recorded at no charge. Additionally, there is no charge when entering results on an affected animal from a non-CERF/OFA source.

### CHIC Website

The CHIC website is located at [www.caninehealthinfo.org](http://www.caninehealthinfo.org). The website contains basic information on CHIC such as its mission and goals, and maintains a listing of the participating breeds and approved breed specific test protocols. The CHIC website also provides a search engine to locate dogs that have been issued CHIC numbers, their test dates, and the results of their tests.

### Participation

Any parent club interested in participating in the CHIC program should contact either the OFA or the AKC/CHF to discuss the program, entry requirements, answer any questions, or to request application forms.

Each breed should have a health committee and survey results which determine the major health concerns within the breed. The club should select one person from the health committee to be the CHIC liaison, and to work with the club's membership in determining what health tests should be considered for participation in the CHIC program. Questions to be considered are: what tests are currently available and being used, and at what age are the tests appropriate and reliable. Staff members from the OFA and the AKC/CHF will assist parent clubs during this phase of requirement and protocol definition.

The following list of breed specific requirements for Labrador Retrievers and Bull Terriers illustrates how different parent clubs have tailored CHIC test requirements to the health issues facing their breed:

- Labrador Retrievers
  - Hip Dysplasia

- Elbow Dysplasia
- Eye Disease
- Bull Terriers
  - Congenital Cardiac Disease
  - Congenital Deafness
  - Patella Luxation
  - Kidney Disease

## Contacts

Questions regarding the CHIC program may be addressed to:

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*The Orthopedic Foundation for Animals is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) foundation formed in 1966 with the following objectives:*

1. *To collate and disseminate information concerning orthopedic and genetic diseases of animals.*
2. *To advise, encourage and establish control programs to lower the incidence of orthopedic and genetic diseases.*
3. *To encourage and finance research in orthopedic and genetic disease in animals.*
4. *To receive funds and make grants to carry out these objectives.*

*The AKC/Canine Health Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization formed in 1995 with the following mission: To develop significant resources for basic and applied health programs with emphasis on canine genetics to improve the quality of life for dogs and their owners. The AKC/Canine Health Foundation is the largest funder of exclusively canine health research in the world.*