

Maremma Sheepdog Club of America (/)

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MAREMMA SHEEPDOG HEALTH INFORMATION

The Maremma Sheepdog Club of America is dedicated to the future protection and improvement of the Maremma Sheepdog breed. As part of this dedication, the MSCA recommends that breeders subscribe to and uphold the MSCA **Code of Ethics** ([/code-of-ethics.html](#)) for breeding practices, which requires that all breeding dogs be screened for hip dysplasia before breeding.

The MSCA Health Committee

Potential puppy buyers want their new Maremma Sheepdog puppy to have the best possible chance for a long and healthy life. Routine veterinary care is important towards achieving that goal, additionally, the risks for heritable health diseases can be greatly reduced through careful breeding practices, beginning with screening examinations before breeding.

The MSCA Health Committee believes that it is important that ALL dogs be screened for heritable diseases, even those who may never be bred, and that results be released for public view, both normal or abnormal. By doing this breeders will have access to documented information which is INVALUABLE to making educated breeding decisions.

Every breed (and mixed-bred dogs too) is subject to hereditary diseases, and the Maremma Sheepdog is no exception. Failure to screen for heritable diseases before breeding could result in taking unnecessary risks for passing on genetic disease.

Pertaining to these considerations, the MSCA Health Committee will be gathering health information to build a breed health database.

Presented here is information about some heritable diseases.

What is a genetic disorder? (<http://ic.upei.ca/cidd/>)

MAREMMA HIP TESTING INCENTIVE PROGRAM ([/msca-hip-testing-incentive.html](#))

Have your MSCA registered Maremma's hips certified through OFA or PennHip and receive a \$25 rebate check from the MSCA!

Click "**HERE** ([/msca-hip-testing-incentive.html](#))" to learn more!

MSCA BREEDER INCENTIVE!

The MSCA would like to recognize those Breeders who are instrumental in educating their puppy buyers about recognizing the importance of hip testing and certification of their dogs – For every owner who submits proof of the puppy's OFA/PennHIP hip certification, the Breeder of the puppy will receive a \$5.00 credit towards their annual MSCA membership dues, up to the full yearly fee.

Click "**HERE** ([/uploads/1/2/9/2/12922508/hip_certificate_submission_form.pdf](#))" to download form!

Hip Dysplasia (HD)

Hip dysplasia is the abnormal formation of the "ball-and-socket" hip joint and occurs in many breeds, especially in larger dogs. It is primarily inherited, and development is believed to be influenced by multiple genes. The risk and severity of hip dysplasia may also be increased by environmental factors such as overfeeding that leads to rapid growth during early puppyhood, neutering prior to maturity, and possibly certain other factors, like exercise.

Indication of hip dysplasia cannot be detected in young puppies, but will often appear between four and twelve months of age. Symptoms can vary greatly from mild stiffness after exercise to severe lameness. Improvement, or even absence of

symptoms, can occur as the dog matures and muscles stabilize the joint; however, dysplastic dogs usually develop some degree of arthritis and discomfort as they age.

Dogs must be 24 months of age or older to receive final hip certification, with the hip x-rays sent to either the **Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (<http://www.offa.org/>)** (OFA) or to **PennHIP (<http://www.pennhip.org>)** for diagnostic evaluation. The two evaluation procedures differ somewhat but both are acceptable. The MSCA encourages all Maremma Sheepdog breeders to have dogs screened for hip dysplasia before breeding.

Dysplastic dogs should not used for breeding, but may lead long, happy lives. The radiographic appearance of the hips does not always correlate with clinical symptoms, and many dysplastic dogs show no outward signs until middle or older age when secondary arthritis may cause increasing discomfort. Regular, moderate exercise and weight control are important to managing dogs with hip dysplasia, even those without symptoms. Depending on severity, dogs with symptomatic disease may be treated with dietary supplements, medication, and/or surgery.

Elbow Dysplasia (ED)

Elbow dysplasia often first appears as front leg lameness in young dogs, although symptoms can appear at any age. While not as common as hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia is estimated to affect approximately 10% of dogs. Like hip dysplasia, many affected dogs have no symptoms, yet can pass more serious disease to their offspring. For other affected dogs, symptoms range from mild stiffness to severe lameness.

Elbow dysplasia is primarily inherited and development is believed to be influenced by multiple genes. However, severity of elbow dysplasia may also be increased by rapid growth during early puppyhood as a result of over-feeding.

Dogs must be 24 months of age to receive final elbow certification, and screening elbow x-rays should be submitted to the **OFA (<http://www.offa.org/>)** for diagnostic evaluation. Elbow dysplasia can be difficult to diagnose in its early stages or in very mildly affected dogs, and even non-breeding dogs and dogs under 24 months with unexplained front lameness can use OFA's diagnostic services when the diagnosis is uncertain.

Although dogs with elbow dysplasia generally are not bred, many lead normal, happy lives. Depending on severity, dogs with symptomatic disease may be managed by weight control, dietary supplements, medication, and/or surgery.

Eye Disease

All breeds of dogs are subject to genetic eye disease in which there is evidence of a genetic or heritable cause, such as cataracts and retinal disease.

Eyelid and eyelash disorders also may occur, and are generally believed to have a hereditary basis. Entropion and ectropion are conditions that cause the eyelids to roll inward or outward, respectively; and distichiasis is a condition in which misdirected hairs touch and irritate the surface of the eye. Depending on severity, surgery may be advised to correct these problems. Although dogs with these conditions can receive eye certifications, these diagnoses will be noted on the forms and these dogs should not be bred.

Annual examination by a board certified veterinary ophthalmologist is recommended for the lifetime of any dog that has been bred, because hereditary eye problems can develop at varying ages. Eye exams should be certified through the **OFA (<http://www.offa.org/>)**, and are valid for only 12 months from the date of examination.

Certifications

The MSCA Code of Ethics requires that all dogs to be used for breeding have received their certification for hip dysplasia. The MSCA Health Committee suggests certifications be placed in the public record on searchable databases, both the database provided by the **Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (<http://www.offa.org/>)** and the future MSCA Health database.

Breeders often describe their dogs as "hip, elbow, and eye certified" or as having "all their clearances" and these statements usually can be verified on the OFA website. Records can be accessed by searching using the dog's full registered name (with exact spelling) or registration number, and breeders should not hesitate to provide you with this information.

Be warned! Accept no substitute for documented proof of health testing that has been submitted to the databases. It is far too easy to falsify documents.

One of the MSCA Health Committee's goals is to encourage breeders to use only dogs who have received their health clearances, so that future breeding lines will have health clearances that extend back to multiple generations of ancestors. Health clearances that include grandparents, great-grandparents, and even beyond, offer decreased incidence of hereditary disease in puppies. Risk can never be zero – and in some cases environmental influences also play a role – but health testing of several generations of ancestors offers the best possible chance that the puppy will not develop these genetic diseases.

There are additional conditions such as hypothyroidism, heart disease, epilepsy, skin disease, cancer, etc, for which routine screening of Maremma Sheepdogs is not performed. Potential buyers should feel free to ask the breeder about these or any subjects of concern to them, and the exchange of such information is an expected and customary practice.

MSCA
CHIC PROGRAM (/msca-chic-program.html)



CHIC, the "Canine Health Information Center", is a database of consolidated health screening results. Sponsored by the OFA, CHIC works with parent clubs to identify health screening protocols appropriate for individual breeds. Dogs tested in accordance with the parent club established requirements, that have their results registered and made available in the OFA Online Database are issued CHIC numbers. CHIC is meant to encourage health testing and sharing of all results, normal and abnormal, so that more informed breeding decisions can be made in an overall effort to reduce the incidence of genetic disease and improve canine health. Participation in CHIC is entirely voluntary.

sponsored by the MSCA Health Committee



No breed on this planet is 100% immune from genetic hereditary health problems.

"Never had health problems"
is NOT the same as
"Health certified to limit diseases"

Ask about health testing and certification.
-OFA/PennHip-

Maremma Sheepdog Club of America
<http://www.maremmaclub.com/health.html>

More Information:

1. **Orthopedic foundation for Animals (OFA)** (<http://www.offa.org>)
2. **PennHip** (<http://www.pennhip.org>)
3. **Canine Inherited Disorders Database** (<http://ic.upei.ca/cidd/>)

For more information about the MSCA Health Committee, please contact: gelbvieh@uslink.net
 (mailto:gelbvieh@uslink.net)

The MSCA Health Online Database

coming soon!

The MSCA Health Committee will sponsor a MSCA Health Online Database (MSHOD).

Purpose:

Under the guidance of the Maremma Sheepdog Club of America's Constitution & Bylaws and Code of Ethics, the MSCA Health Committee:

1. Promotes, through education, the advancement of breed health.
2. Serves as a source of health information for owners and breeders.
3. Collects health information for the MSCA Health Database.

Disclaimer:

This site is intended to provide health information regarding the Maremma Sheepdog breed and to its members and those who are inquiring about the Maremma Sheepdog. It is no way intended to diagnose or provide a method of treatment.

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MAREMMA SHEEPDOG CLUB OF AMERICA

Cindy Benson, Secretary / Treasurer

720 Pelton Lane, Gold Hill OR 97525

541-855-5503

Email: mscsecretary@gmail.com (mailto:mscsecretary@gmail.com)

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