

Skye Terrier Health Report 2025

2024 was a busy year for the breed. Quarter 4 registrations are not published yet but there are at least 3 further litters, some large to add the number of puppies registered this year. This will take us up to a similar figure as in 2022, which is good to see and hopefully we can maintain these increased numbers.

The Royal Kennel Club have recently published the new Health Standard. The Health Standard is intended to help refocus breeders on preserving and maintaining the health and longevity of breeds. It also hopes to help simplify the health testing landscape so that people who are considering breeding can easily understand what testing is required. For Skyes, the Health Standard does not change the landscape for the breed - there are no new tests in place and the Health Standard simply recommends that breeders try to preserve genetic diversity with their breeding programmes.

The Royal Kennel Club are also in the process of updating their Population Analysis to include data from the early 2000s to 2024. The last Population analysis was published in the early 2000s so this will be a good chance to see how the breed data and profile has changed. Health reporting is an important part of monitoring the breed's health as it gives us an idea of what health conditions are prevalent and how they might be affecting the breed population.

This year we have had 12 new reports of health conditions including 2 cases of puppy limp, 1 case of premature closure, 2 more cases hemangiosarcoma and 2 cases of meningitis.

Reported conditions

The following conditions have been reported in Skye Terriers:

Hepatitis/hepatic failure/acute onset ascites - 16

Renal dysplasia - 9

Skye Limp - 7

Haemangiosarcoma - 7

Premature elbow closure/elbow dysplasia - 6

Lingually displaced canines - 5

Lymphoma - 4

Kinked tail - 4

12 HEALTH
CONDITIONS
REPORTED IN 2024

REGISTRATIONS - LAST 10 YEARS

2024 - 54 (up to quarter 3)

2023 - 36

2022 - 71

2021 - 75

2020 - 27

2019 - 59

2018 - 50

2017 - 40

2016 - 28

2015 - 43

Yearly average: 48

Luxating patella - 4
Mammary cancer - 3
Epilepsy - 2
Pyometra - 2
Malignant oral melanoma - 2
Meningitis - 2

1 each of the following conditions:

congestive heart failure, thyroid cancer, perineal hernia, mandibular osteosarcoma, ectopic ureter, pancreatic disease, heart murmur, heart disease (details unknown), congenital ventricle septum defect, craniomandibular osteopathy, squamous cell carcinoma, parathyroid adenoma, tumour on the siatic nerve, brain tumour, torsion/bloat, mast cell tumour, juvenile arthritis, polycystic kidney disease, hepatoid adenocarcinoma, malignant exoskeletal bony tumour, hereditary eye condition (tbc), anal furunculosis, skin allergy (undefined), benign prostatic hyperplasia

Genetic Diversity

The new Kennel Club Health Standard advises all breeders of skye Terriers to breed to preserve genetic diversity, but what does this mean?

Dogs have 39 pairs of chromosomes that contain the genetic material that gives them their species and breed characteristics. Each chromosome contains several genes. There are different versions of genes, called alleles. If a dog has 2 versions of the same allele on each chromosome they're said to be homozygous for that gene. If a dog has 2 different version of the same allele on each chromosome they are said to be heterozygous for the that gene.

Increased levels of homozygosity compromises health because the lack of

variation unmasks resessive traits, including genetic disease that can have a negative impact on a dog's health. Generally, the more genetically diverse a dog is, the more likely it is to be genetically healthy.

In pedigree dogs, levels of homozygosity are measured in various ways, the most common of which is the Inbreeding Coefficient (COI). The COI is an estimate of the probability that any two genes in a dogs' DNA have the same allele. The more closely related two dogs are, the higher the COI their offspring will have. A brother-sister mating results in a COI of 25%.

The current Royal Kennel Club breed average COI for Skye Terriers is around 6.6%.

How to preserve genetic diversity

There are several ways to preserve genetic diversity and ensure puppies have a low COI. These include:

- analyse pedigrees before choosing a mate
- select a mate that is not related to your dog
- select a mate that has not been used a lot already (so called popular sires)
- use dogs from different sub-populations, such as dogs imported from abroad

Genetic diversity directly impacts health and longevity of breeds. It is therefore important to breed to preserve genetic diversity. Health reporting is a vital part of monitoring the genetic diversity and health of a breed. When genetic diversity is lost genetic diseases, some cancers and auto-immune disorders will increase in frequency. Monitoring what health conditions are prevalent can therefore help to indicate the genetic health of a breed.

Breed Health Survey

Don't forget, if you have a litter you will need to DNA swab the puppies before they leave for their new homes. The Health Committee also has an information leaflet on puppy limp to give to new owners. Please make them aware of the condition and what to do should their pup start limping.

As part of our ongoing efforts to monitor the health and wellbeing of Skye Terriers the Health Committee are putting together a Breed Health Survey. This is a large scale survey that explores the frequency and impact of certain genetic diseases in the breed. It is hoped that the Survey, when launched, will help to reach more Skye Terrier owners and gather valuable data about the frequency of disease within the breed. We have an extensive database with reported conditions logged however, there are many more Skye Terriers in the UK and around the world we do not have data on. The survey will help us to fill in these gaps.

The Breed Health Survey will be open for several months. There will be an online version and a paper version. The survey can be completed for dogs you currently own and dogs who may have already passed away. The Health Committee is in the process of drafting the questions and we will launch the

survey as soon as we are able to. Please, if you currently own Skye Terriers, consider completing the survey for each dog you own. The more information we have, the more comprehensive our knowledge will be. The survey can be filled out anonymously (for humans) but to make the most use of the data it would be helpful if the dog's registered name is included. Any information shared in the survey will be held confidentially by the Health Committee and no identifiable data will be reported on or shared.

To request DNA swabs, new owner information sheets or kidney scan forms please email sarahdownes1@gmail.com



**CONTACT YOUR
HEALTH
COMMITTEE**

If you have any questions or concerns about health matters, please do not hesitate to contact the Health Committee. You can do this by emailing Sarah (Chair) on sarahdownes1@gmail.com

Please report any health conditions your dog develops as this helps us to monitor overall health of the breed and inform health testing or health initiatives