

# Health Survey 1999

## BACKGROUND

The purpose of the health survey was to determine the type and prevalence of health problems affecting the Polish Lowland Sheepdog.

Every purebred dog fancier desires to have healthy, vigorous, longlived and attractive animals. Despite the best intentions, however, breeders and owners often face the reality of health problems that impact the breed in general or are limited to specific families or members of the breed. Awareness of problems not only helps us plan for the future of current and new generations but also allows veterinarians to more easily diagnose, manage, and treat these diseases. Some owners of Polish Lowland Sheepdogs may believe that health problems are not of significant prevalence in the breed to warrant investigation. Others see problems occasionally and wonder whether it just involves their own bloodlines or whether it's a more widespread problem that no one discusses. Some like to think that diseases just crop up occasionally and are unlikely to reoccur. Whatever your viewpoint, the true status of the breed remains in question without a defensible database. Results of this survey provide data and an assessment of the current problems affecting the PON. This should increase awareness among PON fanciers, provide a baseline for future studies, and serve as educational material for current and future PON owners, breeders, and care providers.

## II . RESULTS

For results reported in the following pages, any condition altering the animal's normal state of health was included, even if the problem was under control with treatment. For example, dogs being medicated for hypothyroidism and in good health as a result were included so that we could estimate the current frequency of this problem. Similarly, over or undershot jaws were listed as they provided insight into the extent and severity of these problems amongst breeding stock.

### A. Response Rate

Questionnaires were mailed in June 1999. Responses were received for the 6 month period, June 1999 through December 1999, from 63 individuals who reported on the health status of 133 dogs.

This response rate is considerably below the minimum rate of 50% deemed necessary to validate the survey population as representing the larger universe of all PON owners. Nevertheless the data provided a description of the health status of the 133 dogs reported by those people who responded. Finally, while assuring confidentiality of reporting may be perceived to be important, only 1 respondent (outside the United States) chose to submit an anonymous survey form.

### B. Demographic Variables

#### 1. General Description

With respect to geography, the location of all dogs (100%) was given. For those located in the United States: 111 live in the United States (90 were born in the US, 16 were born in Poland, 3 were born in Germany, 1 was born in the Netherlands, 1 was born in Holland). Out of the United States: 7 live in Germany (3 born in Germany, 1 born in GDR, 3 born in Tschechia; 2 live in Canada (1 was born in Canada and 1 was born in Poland); 3 live in and were born in Sweden; 3 live in Finland (2 born in Finland and 1 born in Poland); 1 lives in Faroes (born in Denmark); 1 lives in and was born in France; 1 lives in and was born the UK; 1 lives in and was born in Scotland and 3 live in and were born in Australia;

For the 133 dogs profiled, 120 (90%) have always been healthy and 13 (10%) have had identified health problems as of the concluded time period for this report.

#### 2. Number of Dogs Per Owner

Of the 133 respondents, 2 failed to report the number of PON's currently owned. Of the remaining 131, 34 owned only one PON, 18 owned 2-5 dogs and 9 had more than 5 PON's at the time of reporting.

### 3. Sex

Of the 133 dogs reported, 78 (59%) were females and 55 (41%) were males. A total of 11 dogs were reported as neutered; 8 females were spayed and 3 males were castrated.

### 4. Age

Ages were given for all of the 133 dogs reported in the survey; these ranged from 5 months old in 1999 to dogs born in 1982.

### 5. Preventive Health (Vaccination)

Most owners relied upon veterinarians to administer puppy and booster vaccinations, whereas those with more than 5 dogs usually gave their own vaccinations (except for rabies vaccine). Most owners did not identify type of vaccines used.

Three dogs were reported to have experienced significant vaccine reactions (type of vaccine was not identified). One dog was reported to have had vaccine failures (type of vaccine not identified).

## C. Disease in the PON

### 1. Rank Order and Frequency

As described under B.1., 13 of the 133 dogs profiled or about (10%) reported one or more significant health problems. The rank order and frequency of the top conditions (including several tie rankings) affecting these 13 dogs in comparison to all 133 dogs reported in the study is listed in Table A.

## II. MORE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE SURVEY POPULATION

### 1. Birth and Death Statistics

Of the 133 dogs reported in the survey, 109 were alive at the time, 22 had died and 2 are unknown. The dates of birth by year were as follows: 1982, 1; 1983, 4; 1985, 1; 1986, 5; 1987, 3; 1988, 5; 1989, 4; 1990, 6; 1991, 4; 1992, 8; 1993, 8; 1994, 8; 1995, 15; 1996, 20; 1997, 10; 1998, 19; 1999, 11.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Number of Births</u>	<u>Number of Deaths</u>
1982-1989	23	2
1990-1995	49	5
1996-1999	60	15
Unknown	1	2
Totals	133	24

	< 1	1-2	2-5	5-9	9-12	>12	Unknown
Males	1	1	1	1	2	2	
Females	0	1	1	1	7	4	2
<b>Totals</b>	1	2	2	2	9	6	2

	Natural	Accidental	Euthanasia	Specific Disease	Unknown
Number	3	3	1	13	4

## 2. Lifespan and Causes of Death

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the lifespan of dogs reported in the survey by sex and age at death.

Table 3 lists the causes of death by various categories, namely, natural causes, accidental death (injury, fire, storm, hit-by-car), euthanasia and specific disease where this was provided. Four animals died of unspecified or unknown causes.

Of the 24 dogs that were no longer alive at the time of reporting, 13 died from a specified type of disease.

## **III. Specific Diseases in the PON**

For the individual diseases below, each disease lists the number and cumulative frequency of affected dogs in comparison to the total population of 113 Polish Lowland Sheedogs profiled.

**Table A**

### **Order of Top PON Health Problems Reported**

Rank	Condition	Number Affected	%
1	Excitability	16	12%
2	Shy	11	8%
	Aggressiveness	11	8%
3	Fearfulness	9	6.76%
	Ear Infections	9	6.76%
4	Pruritis	8	6%
	Food Hypersensitivity	8	6%
5	Hypothyroidism	7	5.3%
	Passivity	7	5.3%
6	Itching	6	4.5%
	Chewing Skin/Coat	6	4.5%
7	Pseudopregnancy	5	3.75%
	Umbilical Hernia	5	3.75%
	Lymphoma	5	3.75%
	Poor, Thin dry coat	5	3.75%
8	Hot Spots	4	3%
	Sebaceous Cysts	4	3%
	Warts	4	3%
	Arthritis	4	3%
	Autoimmune Thyroiditis	4	3%
9	Hip Dysplasia	3	2.2%
	Prostate Disease	3	2.2%
	Kidney Disease	3	2.2%
	Seizures	3	2.2%

	Flatulence	3	2.2%
	Vaccine Reaction	3	2.2%
	Hives	3	2.2%
	Pyometra	3	2.2%
	Undershot Jaw	3	2.2%
	Bilateral Cataracts	3	2.2%
	Entropion	3	2.2%
10	Dermatitis	2	1.5%
	AIHA	2	1.5%
	Cushing's Disease	2	1.5%
	Cruciate Ligament Rupture	2	1.5%
11	Vaginitis	1	.75%
	Metritis	1	.75%
	Addison's Disease	1	.75%
	Sarcoptic mange	1	.75%
	Patellar Luxation	1	.75%
	Unilateral Cataracts	1	.75%
	Juvenile Cataracts	1	.75%
	Hemangiosarcoma	1	.75%
	Aural Heamtoma	1	.75%
	Dermoid Cyst	1	.75%
	Cherry Eye	1	.75%

This information should be useful as a guide for PON fanciers to focus their breeding and future efforts on proper diagnosis, management and prevention of the more common disorders affecting the breed.

This survey was prepared and completed by Cheryl Kerner.