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Meet the Doberman – Update Your Knowledge!

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Staying up to date with common, let alone rare, health risks in susceptible dog breeds can be difficult. In this regular feature, our Educational Partner, the [International Partnership for Dogs \(IPFD\)](#), signposts resources on a particular breed and highlights breed-specific diseases

Meet the Doberman – Update Your Knowledge!



IPFD has published “[Get a GRIHP! on the Doberman](#)” as an in depth examination of health and well-being of this breed. “Dobermanns are used by the police and serve as guards; today’s dogs make very nice companions for all kinds of work and dog sports hobbies.”¹

According to Finnish statistics, the estimated life expectancy of a Doberman is around 8 years.¹ Main reason for this relatively low life expectancy is Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM), a heart condition that is particularly common and severe in Dobermanns. It is estimated that 20-50% of dogs are affected².

As DCM is a polygenic disease, several different gene variants can be present in a breed. Two variants have been identified in the Doberman^{3,4}. The “golden standard” test for DCM is a cardiac echocardiography accompanied with electrocardiogram, preferably 24-hour (Holter). These methods can detect the condition



at least two years before the onset of clinical signs. Medical treatment of dogs in the pre-clinical phase may delay the progression of the disease.

Other health conditions that may affect the members of the breed include:

- Tumours
- Spinal/vertebral conditions: spondylosis, wobblers syndrome (instability of the cervical vertebrae) and lumbosacral transitional vertebrae (LTV).
- Cruciate ligament ruptures
- Eye conditions, particularly persistent hyperplastic primary vitreous (PHPV), also known as persistent hyperplastic tunica vasculosa lentis (PHTVL)
- Renal dysplasia
- Gastric dilatation volvulus, also known as bloat.
- von Willebrand disease
- Allergies and atopies
- Narcolepsy
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Doberman hepatitis – now rare.

Vets should advise clients and prospective owners that, as intelligent, motivated working dogs, Dobermanns need time, activity, and training.

Prospective owners must choose the breeder and the litter carefully, as it is very important that the health challenges of the breed are considered when selecting dogs for breeding. Breeding dogs should be health tested before mating (see chart for requirements and recommendations in different countries).

Health strategies from various countries recommend or require screening to keep watch on conditions of interest:

Health Screening Summary by Country

R1-Mandatory for registration
R2-Recommended
R3-Recognized

Condition	UK	US	Germany	Sweden	Norway	Netherlands	Finland	France
Hip Dysplasia	R2	R2	R2	R1	R1	R2	R1	R2
Elbow Dysplasia			R3	R3	R2		R3	
Spine (spondylosis/LTV)			R3	R2	R2		R3	
Eye examination	R2	R2	R1	R2	R2		R1	R2
Heart auscultation and/or ultrasound and/or 5 min. ECG/Holter	R2	R2	R1	R2	R2	R1	R1	R2
Doberman hepatitis - liver enzyme test (ALAT)				R2	R2		R1	
Dilated cardiomyopathy (DNA tests)		R3	R3	R2	R2		R2	
von Willebrand disease (DNA test)		R2	R2	R1	R3	R2	R2	
Genetic diversity		R2	R3		R2		R3	
Thyroid (Autoimmune thyroiditis)		R2			R2			
Mental test/description/working result		R2	R1	R1	R1	R3	R2	R2

LTV = lumbosacral transitional vertebrae; ECG = electrocardiogram; Holter = 24-hour electrocardiogram



References:

1. Get a GRIHP on the Doberman - <https://dogwellnet.com/content/health-and-breeding/breeds/breed-specific-health-reports/get-a-grihp-on-the-dobermann-r808/>
2. Wess et al. 2010. Prevalence of Dilated Cardiomyopathy in Doberman Pinschers in Various Age Groups. J. Vet. Int. Med. 24: 533-538.
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4. Meurs et al. 2012. A splice site mutation in a gene encoding for PDK4, a mitochondrial protein, is associated with the development of dilated cardiomyopathy in the Doberman pinscher. Human Gen. 131: 1319-1325.



The International Partnership for Dogs (IPFD) is a non-profit working for dog



health, well-being, and welfare. This article has been prepared by its Business and Project Coordinator, Katariina Mäki, PhD (Anim Sc)

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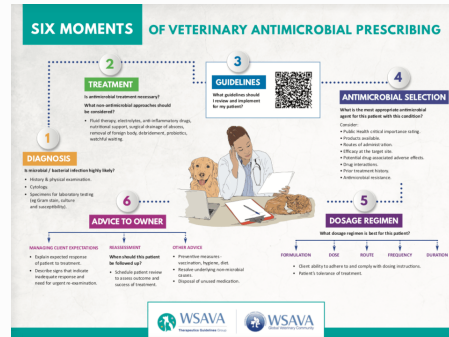
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