

How to complete the required Health Tests for CHIC

By Tina Dennis

It isn't just the beginner that has questioned me about getting their dogs tested and how to get a Canine Health Information Certification (CHIC) number. Experienced long time breeders don't know the ropes. This is a *how to get it done* article. I hope it helps you and motivates you.

The Norfolk Terrier Club is advocating the testing of all Norfolk Terriers. There are three mandatory tests your dog needs to receive the CHIC Number. First, your dog must be permanently identified. This can be achieved with a micro chip or by having the dog tattooed.

The **first test** you will need is CERF (Canine Eye Registration Foundation). This eye test must be performed by a Veterinary Ophthalmologist. A list of Veterinary Specialist can be found on the web at <http://www.vmdb.org/clinic.html>. You will need to take the dog's registration with you so you can fill out the form (supplied by the Ophthalmologist). They require registration numbers, date of birth of dog, sire and dam registration numbers, and permanent ID number. After the exam, the vet will provide you with a copy of the form he has completed and advise you of any eye abnormalities. Your vet will then submit his original to CERF. The original is for information purposes only and no dog's names are associated with the data that is compiled from this CERF test.

The 2006 CERF report on Norfolk indicates that out of 159 dogs tested, 92 had some type of eye abnormality. Because a dog has an eye abnormality means the dog will not pass the CERF test. Diseases of major consideration to our breed are optic nerve hypoplasia and optic nerve coloboma. These two diseases can be detected as early as eight weeks and cause total blindness if unilateral. Cataracts appear at all ages in the 2006 data and can also cause a dog to be rejected. Some ophthalmologists consider any cataract reason to eliminate a dog from breeding. Others have told me that after the age of six, they aren't as concerned about cataracts.

Some abnormalities require that the dog be retested in six months. I have had dogs that were rechecked for what appeared to be a problem, only to discover six months later, that it was not a problem at all. Listen to what your Ophthalmologist is telling you. If you don't agree, get a second opinion.

If your dog is rejected or clear, you have to decide whether or not to submit your copy of the CERF report to CERF. There is information to complete on the back of your copy and a cost of \$10.50 per dog to submit the form. You will not qualify for a CHIC number without submitting the form. Once submitted, your dog's information will be posted to the CERF verification web site (<http://www.vmdb.org/verify.html>), transmitted to the CHIC information site, and transmitted to the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA). CERF will send you a copy of the certification with your dog's number. You will need this number for any future rechecks.

Currently, the Norfolk Terrier Club has not given the Canine Eye Registration Foundation any criteria for eliminating a dog from a breeding program. The only elimination currently are those diseases that are known to be genetic and found to cause blindness in dogs. An inexpensive way to get your dog's eyes tested is to take them to a show where a CERF clinic is being held, or an event (many hunting breeds hold CERF clinics) where a clinic is being held. Organizing your own CERF clinic with other breeders in your area can also save you money. CERF posts a list of clinics on their web site.

The Norfolk Terrier Club has given no guidance as to when to have your dog CERF'd or how frequently. I personally test **all** puppies between 8 weeks and 12 weeks. I try to repeat the test annually on any dogs I keep for show and breeding. This test runs anywhere from \$25 to \$100, depending on where you have it done.

The **second test** required for a CHIC number is the patella exam. This has to be completed after the dog is one year old. It is a physical manipulation and can be done by your personal veterinarian. The instructions for the exam are found on page two of the application. You can download the form from <http://www.offa.org/plappbw.pdf>. The test is to check for patella luxation. This can be detected in puppies as young as six weeks. The cost to send the report to OFA is \$15 per dog. The cost for the exam is up to your vet.

The **final test** needed for a CHIC number is the Heart Exam to detect Mitro Valve Disease. This exam must be completed by a Board-Certified Cardiologist. To locate a cardiologist you can ask your personal vet for a referral or you can look for one on the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel web site (<http://www.cavalierhealth.org/Cardiologists.htm>). A second web site to locate a cardiologist is the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (www.acvim.org). Once on the ACVIM site, search under Search for a Specialist.

The Heart Test is an expensive test but well worth the investment. Studies already completed by Norfolk people (Friends of Norfolk Health and others) have discovered that you **cannot** detect trivial leakage by just listening (Auscultation). The requirement of the Norfolk Terrier Club is that you have an Echocardiogram with Doppler. When your dog completes this test, you can ask the cardiologist to complete the OFA form and sign it. You will then have to submit the form to OFA. The form can be obtained from OFA at <http://www.offa.org/cardappbw.pdf>. The cost to submit the form is \$15 per dog. According to a recent conversation with a cardiologist here in Texas, she suggested testing before breeding and every two years after that up to age seven. After age seven, it is difficult to say if the heart problem is genetic or geriatric. The cost for the Echo/Doppler test varies by area. Again, going to a clinic or organizing a clinic with other breeders in your area can help reduce the cost.

The requirements for the CHIC number is for one test in each of these three areas: heart, patella, eyes. The debate is whether that is enough to insure the health of Norfolk Terriers in the United States. That debate is for another day. If you aren't testing your dogs, start. If you are testing your dogs, be open and honest with other people that are using your dogs or purchasing your dogs. Let it not be said that Norfolks are beautiful but have many health problems. Let it be said that our Norfolks are strong, healthy and beautiful dogs.

If you are interested to find out if a dog you are considering breeding to has health testing, you can research that dog at www.offa.org. You will need the name of the dog or the registration number. All dogs that have been tested and have had their tests submitted are listed on that web site Tina Dennis, Regency Norfolks

