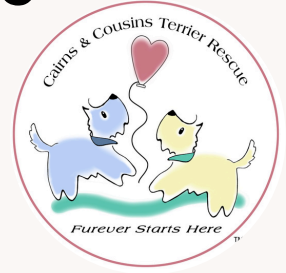


Cairns & Cousins Terrier Rescue

Monthly Newsletter

**DEDICATED TO RESCUING CAIRN TERRIERS AND
OTHER SMALL STATURE TERRIER COUSINS**



Terrier Talk

With the elevating cost of veterinary healthcare threatening pet ownership, CCTR has decided to dedicate this issue to the most common health issues facing the breeds we love. By and large, terriers originating from Scotland are typically healthy, energetic dogs, but there are conditions owners need to be aware of in order to best provide them with the care they need.

In rescue, we see many health issues that are exacerbated or even caused by neglect, poor nutrition, and inadequate exercise. CCTR provides financial and educational support to our foster homes to best manage these issues and set the dog on a path to better health. All of our terriers are altered, up to date on core vaccines and those recommended regionally, and have been evaluated and treated for any health challenges they may face. Our adopters receive any medical records that we have and are encouraged to contact us regarding ongoing care if needed.

We hope you find this edition helpful!



Liz Romick

President, Cairns & Cousins Terrier Rescue

Cairns are a healthy breed, but are prone to some health issues

By Jane Campbell

Cairn Terriers are generally healthy and relatively long-lived, with a lifespan of 13 to 15 years. But there are some common health issues that can affect the breed and some of its cousin terriers, including Cushing's disease, luxating patella, ocular melanosis and glaucoma, and allergies. Every family that chooses to adopt one of Cairns & Cousins Terrier Rescue's dogs should be aware of these possible challenges.



Cushing's Disease

Cushing's disease results when the body produces too much of a hormone called cortisol. Cortisol is produced and stored by the adrenal glands, two small glands that sit on top of the kidneys. According to Ann Stohlman, V.M.D, a veterinarian with the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine, cortisol is one of the body's natural steroids and a normal amount helps the body fight infections, maintain healthy body weight and condition, and deal with stress. However, too much cortisol weakens the system, making the dog more vulnerable to disease and infections.

In dogs, Cushing's occurs naturally and is either pituitary-dependent or adrenal-dependent. About 80 to 85 percent of Cushing's is pituitary-dependent, triggered by a tumor on the pituitary gland. It occurs in dogs who are middle-aged or older.

Some common health issues affect Cairns, cousin breeds

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The disease develops slowly and early signs are often either not noticed or mistaken for other problems. These signs include: increased thirst, increased urination, increased appetite, reduced activity, excessive panting, thin or fragile skin, hair loss, recurrent skin infections, and enlargement of the abdomen, resulting in a pot-bellied appearance.

Since it can take a year for the symptoms of Cushing's to develop, many dogs will have advanced disease before their owners recognize there is a problem. No test or combination of tests is 100 percent accurate in diagnosing Cushing's. The diagnosis is often derived through the combination of test results and clinical signs.

Luxating Patella

A luxating patella is a dislocated kneecap. It is considered an inherited condition that causes alignment issues as the dog grows and their bones develop. While the condition is more common in such toy and small-breed dogs as Yorkshire Terriers, Toy Poodles, Chihuahuas and Pomeranians, it also is found in Cairns and their cousins. Although commonly seen in smaller breeds, it also can occur in the larger breeds. According to the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, it genetically occurs in about 7 percent of puppies. While there is a strong genetic connection in many cases, patellar luxation also can occur as the result of a severe injury, such as being struck by a car.

Patellar luxation is defined by four grades of severity:

- Grade 1. The patella manually displaces and then randomly returns to normal, requiring little to no intervention.
- Grade 2. The patella displaces when the knee is extended and then returns to its normal position with little discomfort.
- Grade 3. The patella displaces with extension as in Grade 2, but must be manually returned to its original position.
- Grade 4. The patella slides out of place and remains out of place, causing the dog a lot of pain and the need for medical intervention.



A diagnosis of luxating patella is done through a physical examination and diagnostic imaging such as X-rays, CT scans or an MRI. As with any condition affecting our dogs, if you suspect your pup has injured themselves or they have developed a limp or are favoring one leg, have your veterinarian examine them. Treatment can vary, depending on the severity of the condition, and may include rest, medications, or surgery if the condition persists or worsens. If it is undiagnosed and untreated, it can lead to arthritis as the dog ages.

Preventative measures can go a long way to avoiding luxating patella. Maintaining a healthy weight, giving joint supplements, managing exercise and giving pain medication when needed are potentially helpful for dogs who may be prone to the condition. For dogs with mild luxation, their condition can be managed comfortably for years. Dogs with more severe luxation, significant pain and restriction of mobility, may need surgery, which often leads to positive outcomes, particularly if done prior to the onset of arthritis.

When your dog doesn't seem to be in the best health for their breed and age, your veterinarian should be your first call. A good vet will help you understand the issues and be a partner for you in deciding on a treatment.

Identifying allergy triggers can take time, patience

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Allergies *Rissa's journey*

Cairn Terriers are not specifically prone to allergies but can display allergic reactions on occasion. If your dog is sneezing, itching, has watery eyes or becomes ill when fed certain foods, one of the questions you need to ask is, am I seeing allergies?

Denise S., who has adopted CCTR's Rissa, is working to identify the allergens that are responsible for her skin issues. Rissa, a West Highland White Terrier, was almost completely hairless and had other medical issues when she came into CCTR. Denise said Rissa's recovery is a work in progress. She's made good headway and is regaining her coat. Denise describes it as a treasure hunt. Identifying allergies is really a process of elimination, narrowing down the possible causes for the reaction.

Working closely with your vet and being patient while eliminating possible irritant sources is a large part of successfully identifying the allergen. Allergies can cause skin rashes and itchy spots, vomiting or diarrhea, and affect the eyes and feet. Once an underlying cause has been identified, there are medical interventions that can give the dog relief. Medications that are used to alleviate the symptoms of allergies include Cytopoint and Apoquel, and in the case of some skin reactivities, medicated shampoos. Allergies can't be cured, but they usually can be managed.



Rissa on intake August 2025



Rissa - August 2026

Cairn owners, breeders need to be aware of rare eye disease

By Ellen Moran

As I petted my timid 5-year-old retired commercial breeder, Deena, she glanced to the right and I saw it: brown pigmentation in the sclera, or whites of her eyes.

I'd seen it before in two of my other Cairns and I recognized the brown streak as a sign of ocular melanosis (OM), an eye disease primarily found in Cairn Terriers. A veterinary ophthalmologist at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, confirmed Deena (pictured below) has OM.

Though OM is relatively rare, it appears to have become more prevalent over the past several decades. It isn't clear, however, whether it really is a rise in prevalence or an improvement in the ability of veterinarians and breeders to recognize OM, said Dr. Erin McGovern Scott, a veterinary ophthalmologist at Cornell.

Dr. Scott said that while most cases of OM occur in Cairns, the condition has in rare instances been reported in other dog breeds.



OM, a rare eye disease in Cairns, can lead to glaucoma

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The most significant complication of OM is the development of glaucoma. "This occurs when pigmented cells accumulate within the eye and obstruct normal fluid drainage, leading to increased intraocular pressure. Elevated pressure can be painful, damage ocular structures, and result in permanent blindness. In cases where an eye becomes blind and painful, surgical removal of the eye (enucleation) may be recommended to improve comfort and quality of life," Dr. Scott said.

There is a wide range in both the age of onset and the rate of progression of OM in Cairn Terriers. While many are diagnosed later in life, some develop glaucoma as young as 6 or 7 years, Dr. Scott said. Other Cairns with OM might get well into their senior years and still show only early stage changes in their eyes.

Deena, who was diagnosed in 2025, has a mild case of OM. Her eyes are examined by one of the veterinary ophthalmologists at Cornell every six months.

Early changes of ocular melanosis, which typically affects both eyes, include the darkening of the iris (from medium to dark brown) and the appearance of brown pigmentation in the normally white sclera, Dr. Scott said. Owners may look for these changes by gently lifting their dog's head so the nose points upward and briefly elevating the upper eyelid to view the "whites" of the eye, she said.

Early pigmentary changes are often subtle and not painful, so routine monitoring and a prompt veterinary ophthalmic examination are strongly recommended if owners notice any pigment changes, she said.

Other changes are usually seen later and may indicate progression of the disease, including the development of inflammation in a condition called uveitis, or the increased eye pressure indicative of glaucoma. Changes to watch for include squinting, redness, cloudiness of the eye or signs of discomfort, Dr. Scott said.

Although an early diagnosis won't prevent the progression of OM, it enables veterinarians to treat such complications as uveitis or glaucoma earlier, which can help maintain the dog's comfort and preserve their vision longer, Dr. Scott said. Those treatments include topical medications, such as anti-inflammatory or anti-glaucoma eye drops, which help reduce inflammation and control eye pressures. They are usually prescribed for long-term, often lifelong, use, she said.

Dr. Scott also said that dogs with ocular melanosis should not be used for breeding, as research has shown that OM is an inherited condition.

Cairn Terriers who have been diagnosed with OM should be evaluated and monitored regularly by a veterinary ophthalmologist, according to Dr. Scott. For Cairn Terriers who haven't been diagnosed with OM, owners should monitor them for any increase in pigmentation in their eyes and seek evaluation by a veterinarian if any changes are seen. Regular eye examinations, particularly as dogs age, also are a good idea, Dr. Scott said.

Ongoing research is focused on more closely understanding the genetic basis of OM, with the long-term goal of developing a DNA test, Dr. Scott said. That type of test could enable breeders to identify unaffected dogs and make informed decisions about breeding, which would help reduce and potentially eliminate OM in Cairn Terriers, she said.

Researchers are studying ocular melanosis in Cairn Terriers

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OM has been studied extensively by the team led by Dr. Simon Petersen-Jones at Michigan State University. Dr. Scott said owners who are interested in learning more about OM or determining whether their dog can contribute to ongoing research can visit this website:

<https://cvm.msu.edu/research/faculty-research/comparative-ophthalmology/petersen-jones-laboratory/ocular-melanosis-om-in-dogs>

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Deena enjoying her
Furever backyard -
queen of all she sees



So many ways to help!

Don't miss our Cairns and Cousins Quiltfest Sweepstakes 2.0!

Once again, we have 5 hand-crafted quilts donated by volunteers for you to take a chance on winning. Click [here](#) to see the five quilts and read about their stories

The deadline to enter is September 7, 2026, at 6 p.m. RallyUp randomly draws the winners on September 14. Check out the photo below to see the quilts available to win.

All the monies raised from entries go to CCTR to help rescue, vet, foster and place terriers in need. We have had a couple of recent intakes with major medical issues that have needed extra vetting so this is a great way to support our terriers and take a chance on getting a beautiful quilted keepsake.

Click Here to Learn about
becoming a foster parent with
CCTR

Click Here to See adoption
requirements, steps, and
application

Click Here to
Report a
Terrier in Need

CCTR's Quiltfest 2.0



www.ccterrierrescue.org

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