

Dachshund Health Handbook

An A to Z guide by the Dachshund Breed Council

Dachshund Breed Council



www.dachshundhealth.org.uk

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All about Dachshund Health

Dachshunds generally suffer from few health problems and are long-lived, provided they are kept well-exercised, fit and fed on a healthy, balanced diet. The median (average) age of death reported in the Kennel Club's Health Survey in 2004 was 12 years and 8 months. Dachshunds are, however, a "dwarf breed" and consequently are more prone to back disease than other breeds.

This A-Z guide is written to give you a quick overview of how to keep your Dachshund fit and healthy, plus make you aware of some of the diseases and health problems you might come across. Please be aware that although we might describe a particular health issue here, it doesn't necessarily mean that problem is widespread in the breed.

Always consult a Vet if you have any health concerns about a puppy you intend to purchase, or health problems with an older dog.

Vital Signs (for a normal dog)

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Body temperature (Farenheit) | 100.9 - 101.7 |
| Body temperature (Celcius) | 38.3 - 38.7 |
| Pulse rate | 70 - 100 beats per minute |
| Respiration rate | 15 - 30 breaths per minute |

Back Disease



Dachshunds, being a "dwarf" breed, have a condition known as **CHONDRODYSTROPHY** - "chondro" means cartilage and "dystrophy" means disorder. Chondrodystrophy refers to the abnormal development of bone from a cartilage skeleton during growth from a puppy to an adult. The long bones of the body tend to be affected the most and this results in short limbs. It is "genetically programmed" in dwarf breeds such as Dachshunds.

Discs have an outer fibrous capsule (annulus) and inner gel nucleus. Discs degenerate with age in all animals – they lose water, become more fibrous and sometimes mineralised (calcified). The fibrous annulus can also rupture. Degeneration takes place much earlier in chondrodystrophic breeds, i.e. from 12-18 months, compared with 6-8 years in non-chondrodystrophic breeds. Disc disease can and does happen at any age. Also known as: **Intervertebral Disc Disease (IVDD)**.

Signs that may occur with Back Disease:

- Crying and/or shaking
- Reluctance to move or jump
- Poor appetite due to pain
- Hunched appearance
- Paralysis to rear legs
- Loss of bladder and bowel control

WHEN YOU OBSERVE ANY OF THESE SIGNS, GET YOUR DACHSHUND TO A VET IMMEDIATELY.

While there is not much that can be done to prevent actual disc disease, you can try to minimise the risk of injury by:

- Regular exercise
- Keep them sleek and streamlined, as Dachshunds were meant to be, not obese
- Use two hands to lift your Dachshund, one supporting the chest and one the back end
- Avoid use of stairs and don't allow jumping on or off furniture, including beds

Cancers and Tumours

A tumour is the name for a swelling or lesion formed by an abnormal growth of cells (termed neoplastic).

Tumour is not synonymous with cancer. A tumour can be benign, pre-malignant or malignant, whereas cancer is by definition malignant.

Age of onset is variable, depending on the type of cancer/tumour and its location. Mammary tumours can appear from age 4 onwards, Skin cancers from age 6 onwards.

The rate of cancer increases with age.

Mammary cancer affects 25% of unspayed bitches over the age of 4, for dogs in general.

Regularly handling, stroking and grooming your dog will enable you to spot any unusual lumps.

Harmless lumps may simply be the result of bruising, or through infection, an abscess.

If you are worried, consult your vet, particularly if the lump is increasing in size rapidly, or if numerous other lumps develop.

DNA Testing

The demands on responsible dog breeders grow ever greater, but with the advent of DNA Screening for inherited diseases we can maximise the chances that the puppies we breed will live a long, happy and healthy life.

Where tests for simple Recessive mutations are available, breeders should DNA test **all** breeding stock **before** they are used to produce litters.

This will tell you whether a dog or bitch is:

- a “Clear” (two copies of the normal gene)
- a “Carrier” (one copy of the normal gene and one copy of the mutant gene) or
- an “Affected” (two copies of the mutation)

Breeders can use this information when selecting a genetically compatible mate and avoid matings that are likely to produce “Affected” puppies.

DNA tests for Dachshunds:

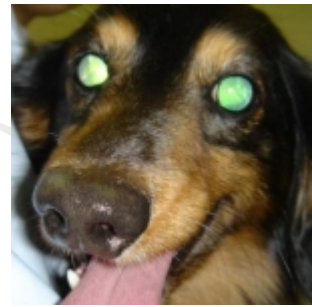
The Breed Council's Health and Welfare Sub-committee has agreed that these tests should be **required**...

- All three coats of Miniature Dachshunds used for breeding (dogs & bitches) should be tested for cord1 Retinal Degeneration (PRA)

It is also a **recommendation** that...

- All Miniature Wirehaired Dachshunds should be tested for Lafora Disease

Eye Disease



There are a number of inherited eye disorders that can affect Dachshunds and we are fortunate to have DNA tests for two of them: cord1 PRA and NPHP4 Day Blindness.

For all other eye diseases, a clinical eye examination is recommended. This should be carried out by a KC/BSAVA/ISDS Panel Vet who will issue a certificate showing the eye status of the dog.

Responsible breeders should use a combination of relevant DNA tests and clinical eye examinations.

- The most common Dachshund eye disorders are:
 - **All Miniatures:** cord1 Retinal Degeneration (PRA)
 - **Mini-Longs:** Distichiasis
- Other eye disorders occasionally found in Dachshunds:
 - Day Blindness (NPHP4)
 - Entropion
 - Ectropion
 - Persistent Pupillary Membrane
 - Optic Nerve Hypoplasia
 - Sudden Acquired Retinal Degeneration Syndrome

Fits (Epilepsy)

Epilepsy is a common chronic neurological disorder that is characterised by recurrent, unprovoked seizures.

A seizure is a clinical sign, not a disease. Seizures may occur as isolated events, in clusters (e.g. over a 24 hour period), or status epilepticus (lasting over 5 minutes).

Status epilepticus and cluster seizures should be treated as medical neurological emergencies.

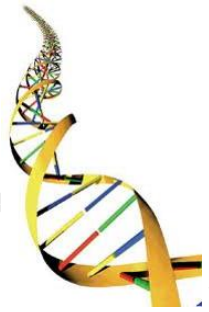
Mini Wire Dachshunds can suffer from a particular form of epilepsy called Lafora Disease and there is a DNA screening test available.

4% of dogs in general, suffer from epilepsy. At the moment, we have no quantified evidence of epilepsy in UK Dachshunds, although it has been reported in Mini Longs and Standard Wires.

No screening tests are currently available for primary (idiopathic) epilepsy. Dogs that have been clinically diagnosed with epilepsy should not be bred from.

If you are buying a puppy, ask the breeder about any history of epilepsy in the puppy's pedigree.

Genetics



Genetics is the study of genes, inheritance and variation in living things. It is particularly important to dog breeders as a little understanding about genetics helps breeders to avoid inherited conditions, plan for desirable traits in their litters and preserve the genetic diversity of the breed for the future. Genes are the instructions found inside all living cells which tell the cell what to do. If an error is made when the code is being copied, it may alter the way in which a gene works. This is called a mutation. Once a mutation has occurred then it can be passed on to the next generation.

Geneticists use the "Coefficient of Inbreeding" as a measure of how inbred a dog is and how likely it is to have inherited the same versions of genes from both its sire and dam. This takes into account how many times the dog has common ancestors on both sides of the pedigree. The lower the average Coefficient of Inbreeding for a breed, the more genetically diverse it is and therefore the lower the chance of bad mutations being impossible to eradicate.

The Kennel Club's [Mate Select](#) website is a good place to find out more about genetics and how inbred any particular Dachshund is.

Heart Disease

Heart Murmurs:

Murmurs are extra heart sounds produced as a result of turbulent blood flow which is sufficient to produce audible noise. Murmurs may be present in normal hearts without any heart disease. These types of murmurs, often referred to as innocent murmurs, usually cause no trouble for the dog. Murmurs are graded on a scale of 1-6, where 6 is the most severe.

Murmurs may be detected in some young Dachshund puppies (8 weeks), but very often these will resolve as the dog grows up.

Otherwise, age of onset is four years and above, and it is more commonly seen in elderly dogs.

Murmurs may also be the result of various problems, such as narrowing or leaking of valves, or the presence of abnormal passages through which blood flows in or near the heart. Such murmurs, known as pathologic murmurs, should be evaluated by an expert.

Heart Disease:

Mitral Valve Disease is the most common acquired cardiac disease in dogs over 10 years of age, affecting over one third of dogs in general. Small breeds are most often affected and some studies show a greater incidence in males than in females.

Mitral Valve Disease is the abnormal leaking of blood through the mitral valve, from the left ventricle into the left atrium of the heart. Although the pattern of inheritance has not been identified, it is generally agreed that there is a genetic basis for the early development of Mitral Valve Disease.

Early signs that the heart is no longer able to compensate for Mitral Valve Disease may include a reduced tolerance for exercise, difficulties in breathing, or a cough at night or at rest. Other signs of a gradually failing heart include fainting, weakness, or collapse.

Inherited Disorders

As with humans, any dog may have an inherited disorder as a consequence of the genes passed down from its parents.

It is easy to find long lists of inherited diseases that Dachshunds may suffer from. That does not mean that any of these are necessarily widespread, or common, in the breed.

Some inherited conditions may be present from birth and are known as Congenital. Other conditions may emerge as a dog ages. Some examples of inherited conditions more commonly found in Dachshunds are covered in this A-Z guide.

Always consult the Breed Council's [health website](#) or a Breed Club for the most up-to-date information on inherited diseases and how these affect Dachshunds.

If you are buying a Dachshund puppy, any responsible breeder will be aware of inherited disorders and will make use of recommended DNA or clinical screening tests, as appropriate.

Jabs (Vaccinations)

Over the past few years there has been increasing debate about canine vaccinations. Views vary on the timing of a puppy's inoculations and the frequency at which boosters should be administered.

In practice, you have to be guided by the advice of your own vet. He or she will know what the specific local risks are and advise an appropriate course of injections. The diseases against which your Dachshund may need to be vaccinated include:

- Adenovirus (CAV-1 and CAV-2)
- Distemper
- Leptospirosis
- Parvovirus (CPV-1 and CPV-2)
- Kennel Cough
- Rabies (if travelling outside the UK)

A new puppy will require vaccination by your veterinary surgeon before it can be taken out and allowed to mix with other dogs.

Kennel Cough

Kennel Cough is caused by a bacterium and can therefore be treated by antibiotics. Dogs can also be vaccinated against Kennel Cough and will generally need this if they are to stay in commercial kennels at any time. The vaccination is given intra-nasally and its effectiveness usually lasts for between 6 and 12 months.

Unfortunately, Kennel Cough is something of a catch-all name for infectious coughing conditions and therefore vaccination may not always be effective in preventing your Dachshund from picking up the disease.

Symptoms include coughing, sneezing, runny eyes and runny noses, all of which can persist for several weeks. During this period, your Dachshund is highly infectious and should not be allowed to socialise with other dogs. If you have several dogs, it is almost certain they will all contract the disease, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on their levels of immunity.

Kennel Cough can be particularly serious for very young puppies and for elderly dogs. For most dogs, the condition has no long-lasting adverse effects.

Lafora Disease



Lafora Disease is an inherited form of epilepsy that affects some **Miniature Wirehaired Dachshunds**. The condition typically only becomes apparent any time from the age of 5 onwards and can take the form of major fitting, jerking of the head, apparent blindness, dementia and unsteadiness on the feet. It can affect both dogs and bitches.

Myoclonus (jerking) is a feature of the disease and characteristically this can be induced by flashing lights, sudden sounds and movement, especially when close to the dog's head. Generalised or complex partial seizures may be seen in some dogs. The disease progresses slowly over many years and gradually other neurological symptoms such as ataxia, blindness and dementia occur.

Dogs that are “Affected” by the disease, or are “Carriers” of the genetic mutation, are at risk of producing more “Affected” puppies if they are bred from with others carrying the mutation.

The Wirehaired Dachshund Club's screening programme has identified approx. 10% “Affected” MWHs in their samples tested. This could mean that over half the UK MWH population is carrying the Lafora mutation. Because the disease is “late onset” most dogs will have been bred from before they exhibit any symptoms. The only way we will be able to avoid breeding further “Affected” Mini Wires is to use the available DNA test to screen all breeding stock, prior to mating.

Dogs known to be “Affected” or “Carriers” should not be mated together. Avoiding such combinations will reduce the incidence of Lafora Disease. They should only be mated to “Clear” dogs.

Mites, Fleas and Ticks

Mites:

There are a variety of different Mites that can cause your Dachshund to scratch...

- Demodex canis
- Sarcoptic scabei
- Cheyletiella yasguri (walking dandruff)
- Otodectes cynotis (ear mite)
- Trombicula autumnalis (harvest mite)

Your vet can diagnose and prescribe suitable treatments for all these mites.

Fleas:

Even the most particular home can pick up the occasional flea. Regular grooming will help keep an eye on the problem. If you do experience a problem with fleas, buy treatment from your vet. If your dog carries on scratching after being treated for parasites, this may indicate an allergy; discuss any problems with your vet.

Ticks:

Your dog may pick up a Tick when walking in the countryside. It can be removed easily using a Tick Remover tool available from most pet shops.

Neutering

Many veterinary surgeons seem to advocate spaying of bitches and neutering of dogs, but this is not a straightforward or obvious decision to make. A review of the scientific literature concluded:

On balance, it appears that no compelling case can be made for neutering most male dogs to prevent future health problems, especially immature male dogs. The number of health problems associated with neutering may exceed the associated health benefits in most cases.

For female dogs, the situation is more complex. The number of health benefits associated with spaying may exceed the associated health problems in many (not all) cases. On balance, whether spaying improves the odds of overall good health or degrades them probably depends on the age of the dog and the relative risk of various diseases in the different breeds.

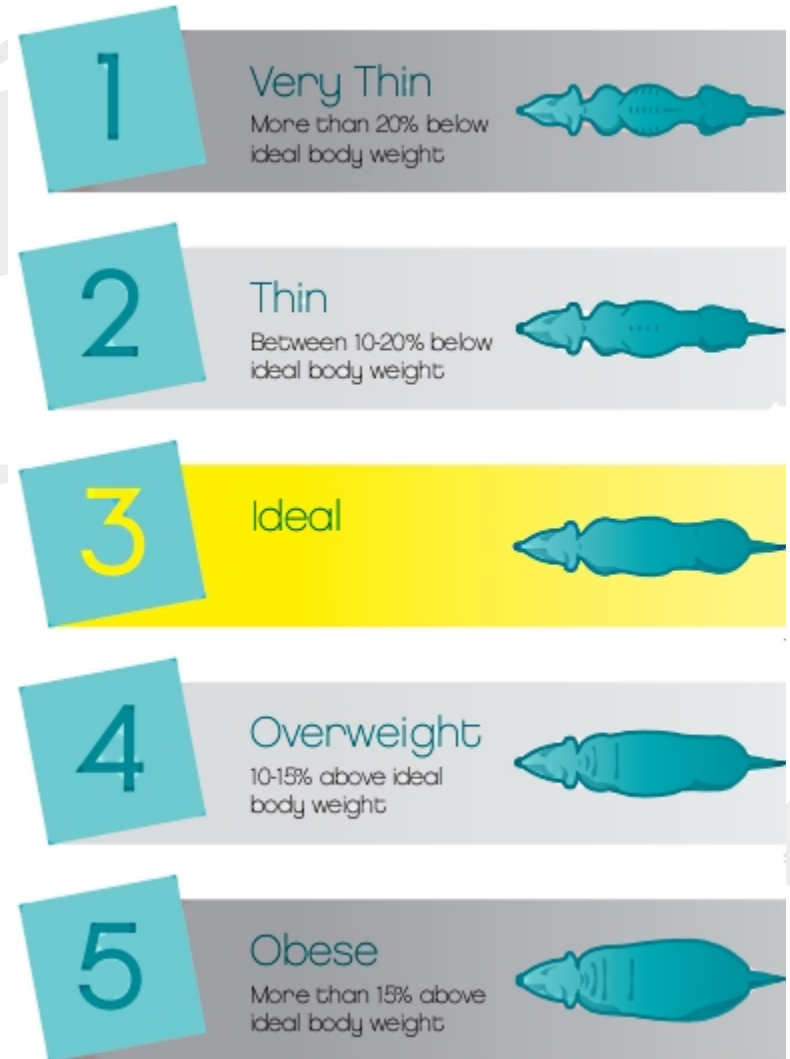
The traditional spay/neuter age of six months as well as the modern practice of pediatric spay/neuter appears to predispose dogs to health risks that could otherwise be avoided by waiting until the dog is physically mature, or perhaps in the case of many male dogs, foregoing it altogether unless medically necessary.

The balance of long-term health risks and benefits of spay/neuter will vary from one dog to the next. Breed, age, and gender are variables that must be taken into consideration in conjunction with non-medical factors for each individual dog. Across-the-board recommendations for all dogs do not appear to be supportable from findings in the veterinary medical literature.

Obesity

For a healthy, happy Dachshund, you need to keep your dog at the right weight throughout its life. Being overweight, or indeed underweight, can lead to serious health risks. It is good to get into the habit of checking your Dachshund's weight on a regular basis. The [Pet Size O-Meter](#) (shown here) is the perfect tool to help you do this.

The risk of obesity increases with age and is more common in neutered animals, and there are associated risks of diabetes and osteoarthritis. The most obvious solution is to reduce the quantities your Dachshund eats (including titbits!), or move it onto a lower calorie food.



Poisons

At home, in your garden, or your garage there may be all sorts of substances which could be poisonous to your Dachshund.

Young puppies are particularly at risk as they are very inquisitive.

These are all poisonous:

- Chocolate
- Raisins
- Detergents
- Disinfectants
- Herbicides, Insecticides and Fungicides
- Slug pellets
- Rat and mouse poisons
- Laburnum
- Daffodil and Snowdrop bulbs

Quick, Weekly Checks

Once a week check your Dachshund's eyes are clear and ears are clean; check whether nails need cutting.

Walking on concrete or a hard surface will help to wear nails down but they may need cutting occasionally. Keep the nails short using nail clippers, or a file. Ask your vet how to do that home, if you need advice.

Brush the teeth with a very soft toothbrush at least once a week, using “doggy toothpaste”.

Make sure there are no tangles in Long or Wire coats. Feel for any lumps, bumps or cuts on the body.

- **Checklist:**

- Eyes
- Ears
- Teeth
- Feet & nails
- Coat & skin

Responsible Breeders

We strongly recommend that you ask a [Breed Club Secretary](#) for recommendations of breeders before visiting puppies, or committing to buy a puppy.

Breeders who are members of a Dachshund Breed Club will comply with our Code of Ethics which covers matters such as health testing, the age at which a bitch should be bred from and the maximum number of litters a bitch should have. Breed Club members will be aware of the relevant health tests which are recommended for Dachshunds and should be able to talk knowledgeably about the relevance of these.

Never buy from a pet shop or “pet supermarket”, however “up-market” they appear to be. Their puppies will almost certainly have come from puppy farms or “back-yard breeders”, where dogs are bred and reared in poor conditions, purely for profit and with little or no regard for health and welfare.

If you have any doubts about the health advice you are given, please contact a member of our [Health and Welfare Sub-committee](#).

Stomach ("Squits!")

Dachshunds are notorious for eating anything and everything, so be prepared for occasional upset stomach "incidents". When out on walks in the countryside they can easily scavenge all sorts of dead or disgusting objects. Some of these may be perfectly harmless, but others may have a more dramatic effect, or at worst, be poisonous.

In most cases, if you can with-hold food for 24 hours and then perhaps feed a bland diet such as cooked chicken for a few days, normal health will be restored. Always ensure plenty of drinking water is available so your Dachshund doesn't become dehydrated.

If your Dachshund is passing blood, or is vomiting frequently in a 24 hour period, you should seek advice from your vet. Your Dachshund may have been poisoned, swallowed something that has caused a blockage, or need treatment for an infection or other more serious disease.

Teeth



Dachshunds should have teeth that are strongly developed, with powerful canine teeth fitting closely. Jaws should be strong, with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite, i.e. the upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaws.

When your dog has all its adult teeth (by about 6 months) start brushing the teeth weekly. Use a very soft toothbrush at least once a week, using “doggy toothpaste”, not human toothpaste.

Bad smelling breath may be a sign of dental disease or gum disease, so you may need to ask your vet to check this out for you. Sometimes a change of diet can help and there are various food additives that claim to reduce plaque and improve breath freshness. However, even with regular brushing you may just have to learn to live with "old foul-breath"!

Urine (House-training!)

If you put the time in when a puppy is very young, then they are quite easy to house-train. You must be prepared to keep letting your new puppy out to relieve itself every 15 minutes or so, while it is awake and playing. As they puppy grows, extend the time interval. The secret is never to let it puddle or mess in the house so that it learns the right habits and does not make mistakes. They can become “confused” and end up playing outside in the garden, and relieving themselves indoors and once your Dachshund gets into this cycle, bad habits can be extremely hard to break.

As with many hound breeds, they can never be classed as 100% house-trained and the Minis seem to be worse than the Standards. However, with consistency and reward for good behaviour your new pup should be well on the way to being clean in the house by about 4 months of age. Even as adults, make sure to let your Dachshund out to relieve itself at regular intervals, to avoid any chance of making a mistake. Watch out when you take your Dachshund visiting to friends' houses. They can be keen to “mark their new territory” and this applies to both dogs and bitches!!

Vets

There are some veterinary problems which occur more commonly in Dachshunds than in other breeds and it's important that your vet is aware of these to help with correct diagnosis and treatment. The Breed Council has produced an Information Sheet for vets which includes references to relevant scientific papers.

Please [download a copy](#) and give it to your vet.

Help your vet to understand your Dachshund's health.

Dach-Facts:
Information for Veterinary Surgeons



DACHSHUND HEALTH INFORMATION

There are some veterinary problems which occur more commonly in Dachshunds than in other breeds, and these are covered below. Some references to recent papers are included, as well as relevant on-line resources. This is not necessarily exhaustive and is only as up-to-date as the published data can make it - we would welcome any comments, or updates that you could provide, to help us make it even more useful.

[Please e-mail: chairman@dachshundbreedcouncil.org.uk]

It is important to understand that conditions affecting Dachshunds may also be found in other breeds or, indeed, in cross-bred dogs, where no programmes to limit or control them can be carried out.

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INTRODUCTION

There are 6 breeds of Dachshunds registered with the UK Kennel Club - Miniature (11lb./5Kg. or less) and Standard which should be up to 26 lb - but often may be rather larger. Both sizes can have Smooth, Long or Wire haired coats. (The Kennel Club, 2009) Miniature Dachshunds are amongst the longer-lived of dogs; one study found dogs of these breeds to be over 14 years old when they died (Mitchell, 1999). The median age of death in the Kennel Club's 2004 Health Survey was just under 12 years. (The Kennel Club, 2009)

Dachshunds are hounds and, as such, should be very intelligent dogs. The downside of this is that they can become bored when left with too little stimulation, and this can lead to behavioural problems. They normally appreciate their food and a loss of appetite can

Worming

The two main type of worm that you need to be aware of are Roundworms and Tapeworms.

Most young puppies will have some degree of Roundworm infestation, passed on from their mother, while still in the womb. When you bring a new puppy home it should have been wormed several times and you should have been given a record of when this has been done.

Tapeworms are more commonly acquired from fleas, which carry the worm eggs.

All dogs should be wormed regularly throughout their life, between three and four times a year. Take advice from your vet on the most suitable product (many products are suitable for treating both types of worm).

At the moment, in the UK, there is no need to treat your Dachshund for Heartworm.

X-rated!

Should I use my dog at stud?

You will probably find that breeders or breeding kennels are not usually interested in using privately owned dogs for stud purposes, unless the dog has some special qualifications or show merit, or has the pedigree that they require for their breeding programme.

With Dachshunds, it's very rarely just a case of putting a dog and a bitch together and "letting them get on with it". Until a dog is experienced at stud, you may well find you have to intervene and "stage manage" his first few matings.



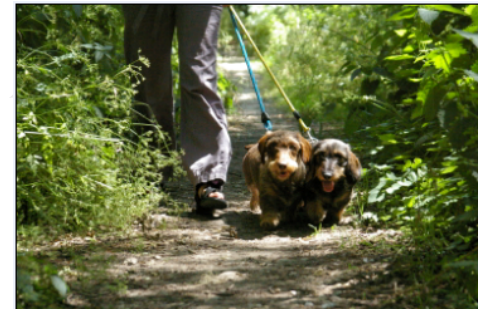
Should I breed from my bitch?

- Ask your vet's advice and ensure your dog is healthy and suitable to whelp a litter
- Carry out all currently recommended health checks e.g. DNA eye testing for all Miniatures and Lafora for MWHs
- Talk to the breeder of your bitch, as they should be able to help advise you on suitable mates
- Read our advice on genetics and diversity, Code of Ethics and Guidance on our Code of Ethics

Zzz...

Dachshunds are hounds and, as such, should be very intelligent dogs. The downside of this is that they can become bored when left with too little stimulation. This can lead to behavioural problems such as destructiveness, excessive barking and house-training issues.

So, if you want a quiet life, with lots of Zzz-time, plenty of exercise and mental stimulation is essential.



Once your Dachshund puppy has finished its course of inoculations, start to take it for a short walk of about 5 minutes every couple of days or so to help get used to traffic and other people and dogs. By the time it is about 4 months old, it should be having a 10 minute walk every other day, then as it gets to 5 months gradually increase the distance and time to about 15 minutes every day. By 6 months it should be going for a 20 to 25 minute walk on the lead each day. By a year old you should be giving your dog a 30-40 minute walk a day. Once adult, your Dachshund will take any amount of exercise you care to give (45-60 minutes/day minimum).

Remember...

- . You may not want to show your Dachshund, but, always contact a [Breed Club](#) for advice on owning a Dachshund
- . If there were no Breed Clubs...
 - there would be no Code of Ethics for members
 - there would be no Health Improvement Plans
 - there would be no Health Screening

Dachshund Breed Council



Where to find out more

Contact any of our [Dachshund Breed Club Secretaries](#). All our Breed Club members have to abide by our Code of Ethics.

www.dachshundbreedcouncil.org.uk
www.dachshundhealth.org.uk

About the Breed Council

In 2007, all 19 UK Dachshund Breed Clubs agreed to form a Breed Council and work together for the good of the breed.

The Breed Council was set up to continue and advance the work of the UK Dachshund Forum which had been in existence for 10 years. The Forum was set up initially to allow Dachshund Breed Clubs to coordinate Show Dates and Judging Lists. The work of the Forum developed to look at Health and Welfare issues, Judges' Education and other matters relevant to the breed.

The Council is a Kennel Club registered organisation and as such has to comply with the Kennel Club rules and regulations for Breed Councils. There are no individual members of a Breed Council, its members are the 19 Dachshund Breed Clubs who all pay a membership subscription to finance the running of the Breed Council. Membership is open to all registered Breed Clubs for the breed.

Disclaimer

This information is presented for educational purposes and as a resource for the Dachshund community. Nothing herein should be interpreted as medical advice for your particular Dachshund(s) and you should contact your veterinary professional for specific advice.