

**Elbow Dysplasia:** Polygenically inherited trait causing elbow arthritis. OFA reports 13.5% affected.<sup>1</sup>

**Polioencephalomyopathy:** Rare autosomal recessive disorder presenting with spastic weakness and incoordination in young dogs. Can also cause seizures, and progress to paralysis.<sup>3,4</sup>

**Portosystemic Shunt:** Undetermined mode of inheritance. Abnormal blood vessels connecting the systemic and portal blood flow. Vessels are usually intrahepatic in this breed. Causes stunting, abnormal behavior and possible seizures. Australian study showed significantly higher prevalence in the breed compared to other breeds.<sup>5</sup>

## Disease Predispositions

**Hypothyroidism:** Inherited autoimmune thyroiditis. 8.5% positive for thyroid auto-antibodies based on testing at Michigan State University. (Ave. for all breeds is 8.4%).

**Cystinuria and cystine bladder stones:** Found to have an increased incidence in the breed.<sup>6</sup>

**Cataracts:** Both anterior and posterior segment cataracts are reported.<sup>7</sup>

**Persistent Pupillary Membranes:** Reported from CERF screening. Not associated with vision problems.<sup>7</sup>

## Isolated Case Reports

**Ceroid Lipofucinosi:** Diagnosed in 2 siblings. Storage disease causing progressive blindness and incoordination between 1 & 2 years of age.<sup>8</sup>

**Lens Luxation:** Observed in middle-aged dogs, leading to glaucoma and blindness.<sup>9</sup>

**Dermatomyositis, osteochondrosis of the hock, patellar luxation, Pelger-Huet anomaly and vonWillibrand's disease** reported in Ackerman.<sup>10</sup>

## Genetic Tests

### Tests of Genotype

Prod-PRA: linkage based test available from Optigen, Inc.

### Tests of Phenotype

- Hip radiographs
- Elbow radiographs
- Eye examinations (CERF Examination): for cataracts, lens luxation, persistent pupillary membranes and other eye abnormalities.
- BAER (Brainstem auditory-evoked potential) test for deafness to identify unilaterally and bilaterally affected dogs.
- Thyroid auto-antibodies; best tested between 2-6 years of age.
- Bile acid and blood ammonia tests (fasting and post-feeding); if suspect porto-systemic shunt.

## Miscellaneous

**Breed name synonyms:** Cattle Dog, ACD, Australian Queensland Heeler, Blue Heeler, Queensland Heeler, Hall's Heelers

**Registries:** AKC, UKC, CKC, KCGB (Kennel Club of Great Britain), ANKC (Australian National Kennel Club), NKC (National Kennel Club)

**AKC rank (year 2003):** 73 (1,298 dogs registered)

### Breed resources:

Australian Cattle Dog Club of America  
http://acdca.org/

## References

1. OFA Website breed statistics: www.offa.org
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4. Harkin KR, Goggin JM, DeBey BM, et. al.: Magnetic Resonance imaging of the brain of a dog with hereditary polioencephalomyelopathy. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1999; May 1; 214(9):1342-44.
5. Tisdall PL, Hunt GB, Bellenger CR, Malik R: Congenital portosystemic shunts in Maltese and Australian cattle dogs. *Aust Vet J* 1994; Jun; 71(6):174-8.
6. Case LC, Ling GV, Franti CE, et. al.: Cystine-containing urinary calculi in dogs: 102 cases (1981-1989). *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1992; Jul 1;201(1):129-33.
7. Ocular Disorders Presumed to be Inherited in Purebred Dogs. American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists. ACVO, 1999.
8. Sisk DB, Levesque DC, Wood PA, Styer EL: Clinical and pathological features of ceroid lipofucinosi in two Australian cattle dogs. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1990; Aug 1; 197(3):361-4.
9. Collier L, McCalla T, Moor CP: Anterior lens luxation in Queensland Heeler (Australian Cattle) dogs. *Proc Am Coll Vet Ophthal* 1989;20:185.
10. The Genetic Connection: A Guide to Health Problems in Purebred Dogs. L Ackerman, p. 197-8. AAHA Press, 1999.



## The Breed History

About the year 1960 in Devonshire England, a stray was found to carry this new "rex haircoat" gene. The first progenitor male was named *Kirlee*. This mutation is not related to Cornish Rex or Selkirk Rex and early crossings between them proved this; though some of these crossbreeds were used in the early Devon Rex breeding program. The Devon Rex haircoat (*rx*) is an autosomal recessive gene affecting normal hair follicle development. The Devon Rex is more waved than curly haired; the latter being the type seen in the Cornish Rex. In 1967, the GCCF in Britain and FIFé in Europe accepted the breed. The CFA recognized Devon Rex as distinct from Cornish Rex in 1979, put the Devons into the provisional class in 1981, and championship status was granted in 1983. In 2013 outcrossing will no longer be allowed; until then, the Devon can be crossed with British Shorthair and American Shorthair cats only.

## Physical Characteristics

**Weight:** 6-9 lb (2.5-4 kg)

**Coat:** Can be any color since hair mutation and color are not linked. Recognized colors include white, black, cream, red, blue, fawn, smoke, cinnamon, lavender, tabby, and bi-color. The underside may be downy and of reduced hair density, but the texture of the coat is silky and fine liked crushed velvet, and bare patches are penalized except temples and ears. Coat overall is less dense than a Cornish Rex coat and is whirled or curled, crinkly rather than wavy, and about 1/2" long. The coat is very short, very soft and the hairs are fine; though normal guard hairs are lacking over the body, on the tail some full guard hairs may make the haircoat a little coarser there. Hair cover on the limbs and head, abdomen, and neck is less curly and shorter. Brow and whiskers may be crinkled, and whiskers and coat hairs break easily. Whiskers are usually less than 1 in (2.5 cm) long. In kittens, waves are not fully developed and coat is not mature until about 16-24 weeks of age, with molting during development, though mature coats can sometimes be significantly delayed in re-growth, finishing well past sexual maturity. Rarely, longhairs are born.

**Eyes:** Large oval eyes can be any color, are wide set and slant up.

**Points of Conformation:** The head is a short modified wedge with a distinct break with pixie-like appearance. Prominent cheekbones, definite stop, and well defined whisker pads are evident. Other features include a moderately short nose, very large rounded ears (with wide base) which are set low, lending the cats an elfin or bat-eared look. Chin is well developed. Neck is fine and medium-long in length. Devon cats are fine boned, lithe and long, with a broad chest. The tail is long and slender. Legs are long, straight and medium in bone, hind legs are longer than the forelimbs. Paws are small and oval with long agile toes.

**Grooming:** Low shedding volume is standard for this breed. Devon cats have minimal grooming requirements. A light chamois or a hand is used to gently rub over the cat as needed. Not advised to blow dry. Oiliness in the coat can be controlled with chamois grooming but periodic bathing may be required. Ears tend to be greasy and require more regular cleaning than the average cat.

## Recognized Behavior Issues and Traits

**Reported breed characteristics include:** Talkative but with quiet voice, playful, intelligent, curious, love to climb and jump high and a cat tree and high perches help to keep Devons exercised. They love warm places and are well suited to apartment life. Devon Rex cats like to play fetch and are active pets overall. Very people-oriented; can be lap cats and can demand attention.

## Normal Breed Variations

- They are not hardy in temperature extremes
- These cats will nurse their young longer than most cats
- Tend to gain weight easily
- Naturally waxy ears so may require more frequent cleaning than the average cat

**Devon Rex Kitten Information Project<sup>1</sup>:** An internet based survey was carried out to gather breed normal data. Data were for 30 breeders, 201 litters with 751 kittens. June 2001-May 2002.

**Average litter size:** 3.7

**Stillbirth rate:** 6%

**Dystocia:** 8% (25% of affected queens required C-section<sup>2</sup>)

**Average birth weight:** Male 88 g female 83 g

Congenital deformities occurred in 12.4% of litters 2, 2.3% born with umbilical hernias, others defects reported included flat chest, and cleft palate.