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## Eye Testing

2015 saw 111 eye tests carried out, a decrease on the 138 bichons tested in 2014. Unfortunately there were **two** cases of hereditary cataracts registered this year so there is some concern that the number of tests are down. Two cases may not be many but it is enough for us to be reminded how important it is to keep testing.

An eye testing session was scheduled to be hosted by the Southern Bichon Frisé Breeders Association in 2016 but as they have a virtually new committee they have not been able to organise it for their February show and as their championship show is held in conjunction with the Windsor show it cannot be arranged there either. There are plenty of eye testing sessions arranged around the country so please make every attempt to get to one of them. You can find dates of forthcoming eye testing sessions at <http://www.bva.co.uk/Canine-Health-Schemes/Eye-scheme/> or alternatively look in the dog press. The Bichon Frise Club of GB is scheduled to hold an eye testing session in 2017.

## 2015 Health Survey & Report

This is the first time the breed clubs have carried out a survey on the internet. The survey was publicised on Facebook through Bichon Groups and Bichon Frise Health UK's own FB page. It was also accessible through the Bichon Health Web Site. In the past the only way we could access bichon owners was to send out a survey form to all members of the three breed clubs and traditionally we have received little over 100 returns mostly coming from the show fraternity.

The response to our on-line survey has been amazing with 806 survey forms returned! Not only does this high number give us a much better picture of the overall health of bichons but we have reached bichons that compete in obedience and agility and a large number of pet owners as well as the show community.

On to the good news. Bichons appear to be in a very good state of health! Unfortunately, by error, we missed out a question on orthopaedics but under the section 'any other conditions not mentioned' we had a good response. The most noticeable was patellar luxation or cruciate ligament problems (16 cases) This condition is prevalent in most toy breeds so it came as no surprise however it does highlight the need for patella testing before breeding. It is encouraging to see that 204 bichons have had patella tests.

Other notes from the survey:

Of the 18 cases of cataracts, the majority were in dogs over the age of 10 but in our next survey we will ask at what age they first appeared. 20% had BVA/KC eye tests within the last 18 months.

Bladder stones is known to be relatively common in bichons but there were only 8 cases of bladder and 3 of kidney stones (1.5% combined)

64% of owners have their dogs vaccinated annually. The accepted protocol is to give core vaccinations as puppies, a booster after one year and then three yearly after that. Non core vaccines (leptospirosis, parainfluenza and kennel cough) have a limited life and must be given annually. In our next survey we will split the question on frequency into core and non core vaccinations.

Of the 385 bichons that were neutered 49 were neutered under the age of 12 months. There is some debate regarding neutering too early which is something we will look into and report back.

11.4% of bichons had some type of allergy. As our breed is a little prone to skin or allergy problems this figure is not of concern, however in our next survey we will refine the question by asking what they were allergic to if known.

Of the 62 bichons that had been bred from not everyone answered how many of each sex they produced so no significant conclusions can be made. In the next survey we will remove the question.

Only 8.7% of bitches had caesarian sections which is a much reduced and encouraging figure from two years ago.

### FUTURE SURVEYS

As this was our first on line survey we can see where some changes or refinements are needed. Some of these are mentioned in the above report. Additionally we think diet should be covered.

If there are any other areas that you think should be added we would be very happy to hear from you. Please email pauline@manoirbichons.com with any comments or suggestions

### ***A big thank you to everyone who participated!***

You can see all the results of the survey by going to our website [www.bichonfrisehealthuk.org](http://www.bichonfrisehealthuk.org)

*It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver*

*Mahatma Gandhi*



## Tear Staining



**A**s Health Co-ordinator I receive three to four emails a month asking for general advice. Sometimes I can advise but most of the time I suggest the writer seeks the help of a vet. Interestingly in the past three months I have received seventeen emails asking for help with tear stains. It is an age old problem that seems to get worse in the winter.

The first thing that occurs to me is any time there are a zillion suggested treatments for something, it means that no one treatment works for everyone and that there must be multiple causes of tear stains. So let us look at why staining happens.

Tear stains are usually caused by dye molecules called porphyrins. Porphyrins are iron-containing molecules, produced when the body breaks down red blood cells. Porphyrins are excreted primarily through bile and the intestinal tract, but in dogs a significant amount of porphyrin is excreted through tears, saliva and also urine.

When tears or saliva containing porphyrin sit on a white coat for any length of time, stains result. These iron-related stains intensify/darken in the presence of sunlight.

All dogs produce porphyrin, but of course porphyrin staining is most noticeable on light coated dogs. A bichon who has been licking or chewing on its leg will turn the coat red-brown in colour.

If the stains are more of a brown than rust colour, it's likely your bichon has developed a yeast infection on the face because the coat under the eyes is constantly wet with tears. Brown stains from a yeast infection are different from red staining caused by porphyrins. This can be important to know if you're trying to resolve brown stains with a product intended for red stains, or vice versa. Yeast infections are also smelly so if your bichon face smells it is likely to be yeast. Bichons can also have both a porphyrin stained face and a secondary yeast infection from the constantly moist skin. What triggers either cause?

Ear infection	Infection of any part of the eye	Unusually large tear glands
Teething	Entropion (inverted eyelid)	Ingrown eyelashes
Incorrect diet	Very small tear duct openings	Kinked or blocked tear ducts
Poor hygiene	Hormones and/or stress	Plastic food bowls

To confuse matters further we can only guess at why some dogs make more porphyrin than others (and therefore have more tear staining). We can assume genetics play a part particularly if the cause is tear duct or gland related.

### What can we do?

This is the big question to which there is no single answer. There are many remedies or treatments that people have tried; some work for one and not for others so below are various options that have worked for some bichons.

**Apple cider vinegar** can raise your dog's pH when added to water. It can also be used in your dog's food for a similar result. Add one teaspoon of apple cider vinegar to food or water for small dogs. The slight increase in acidity will reduce the opportunity that any bacteria or yeast have to take hold in your dog's system.

**Bottled water** It is thought that the high mineral content in tap water in some areas can add to tear staining.

**Anti bacterial eye drops** All bichons should have their eyes cleaned regularly. The use of antibacterial drops will rinse out any dirt or debris and help prevent bacteria from developing

**Baking Soda** Add a few drops of water to baking soda until you have a thick paste. Apply the paste and let it sit for an hour or so. Gently rinse the paste away, making sure none of it gets into the dog's eyes.

**Plaque Off** Usually taken for reducing plaque on teeth some people have reported that it seems to have also helped with tear staining.

**Antibacterial powder or corn flour** Dabbed on lightly can help dry out a damp coat  
**Proprietary products claiming to reduce or cosmetically improve tear stains** There are so many of these around that it really is trial and error.

**Antibiotics** This is a last resort if everything else fails but maybe the only solution if a bacterial infection is present. Consultation with your vet will be required.

## Health Website & Facebook

Last year we registered our own domain name for the health website; [www.bichonfrisehealthuk.org](http://www.bichonfrisehealthuk.org)

All three clubs agreed to pay annually for the maintenance of our domain name and website hosting. Ailish Banks kindly offered to donate the Bichon Frise Club of GB's share. Thank you Ailish.

I hoped to get health information from other countries but it seems there are no health co-ordinators to glean information from so the planned 'International' section has been shelved.

Since launching the web site in April 2014 we have received over 10,000 hits from, amazingly, 83 different countries.

Our Facebook page has received nearly 700 'Likes' from 37 different countries with many visitors clicking through to our health web site.

It is good to know that so many people around the world are interested in the health of bichons!

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## The Karlton Index

The fact that bichons scored '0' on the Karlton Index (an independent register for measuring progress in the health of pedigree dogs) spurred us on to create a website, Facebook page and a more comprehensive survey. We were anxiously awaiting our score for 2015 but, for the moment, scoring has been postponed due to heavy commitments by Philippa Robinson. If we are evaluated at a later date we will announce what we hope will be a vastly improved score.

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## INBREEDING COEFFICIENT UPDATE

For 2013/14 the average inbreeding coefficient for bichons was 10.8%. This figure remains unchanged for 2014/5

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*Never use human toothpaste on a dog. Why? They can't spit, and there are ingredients in many human toothpastes that can make a dog sick.*