

WHAT IS OFA

by Gayle Kaye

OFA stands for **Orthopedic Foundation for Animals**. It was founded in 1966 as a private “not for profit” foundation. Originally the purpose of the organization was to "provide a standardized evaluation for hip dysplasia and to serve as a data base for control of hip dysplasia through selective breeding." However, in recent years it has become so much more. While OFA continues to focus on hip dysplasia, today’s mission, “To improve the health and well being of companion animals through a reduction in the incidence of genetic disease,” reflects the organization’s expansion into other inherited diseases and other companion animals such as cats.”

The Mission of the OFA

To promote the health and welfare of companion animals through a reduction in the incidence of genetic disease

OFA is guided by the following four specific objectives:

- To collate and disseminate information concerning orthopedic and genetic diseases of animals.
- To advise, encourage and establish control programs to lower the incidence of orthopedic and genetic diseases.
- To encourage and finance research in orthopedic and genetic disease in animals.
- To receive funds and make grants to carry out these objectives.

Responsible breeders have a responsibility to breed healthy dogs. The OFA databases are fundamental to the organization’s objective of establishing control programs to lower the incidence of inherited disease. The OFA databases serve all breeds of dogs and cats, and provide breeders a means to respond to the challenge of improving the genetic health of their breed through better breeding practices. The testing methodology and the criteria for evaluating the test results for each database were independently established by veterinary scientists from their respective specialty areas, and the standards used are generally accepted throughout the world. Some of the current databases include Hip Dysplasia, Elbow Dysplasia, Cardiac Disease, Deafness, Dentition, Thyroid, Eye Disease and many others.

Please visit OFA’s website for more information: <http://www.offa.org/index.html>

HIP DYSPLASIA

In order to receive an OFA number, a dog has to be at least 24 months or older on the day of his X-rays. Younger dogs can be x-rayed and evaluated but cannot receive an OFA number. Many breeders do this as a potential early screening. Because of the difficult positioning of the

rear legs, (they must be extended and pulled parallel), most dogs require sedation or anesthetic. Film identification is extremely important. Permanent film identification in the film emulsion is required for all radiographs. Upon completion of X-rays, the owner fills out an OFA application. The radiograph, signed application and fee are then submitted to OFA. OFA also recommends that a copy of a dog's AKC registration be enclosed.

Once the x-rays are received by OFA the process first begins by screening the X-rays for correct positioning and technique. If acceptable, the X-rays are then evaluated by (3) board certified Veterinary radiologists and a consensus of their opinions is taken. "The hips are evaluated for subluxation, shallow acetabulum (socket), femoral head/neck remodeling, acetabular rim/edge changes and degenerative joint diseases."

THE GRADING CATEGORIES ARE:

Excellent, good and fairall considered Normal and will receive OFA numbers.

Borderline... ..Recommend a recheck in 6-8 months.

Mild, Moderate and severe.....Dysplastic.

In order for the OFA number to be on the dog's AKC registration form, as of July 1, 1996, a dog must be either tattooed or micro-chipped at the time the X-rays are taken. This identification should be noted on the X-rays. OFA sends a quarterly report of OFA numbers to AKC.

The OFA number is similar to the CERF number, in that each element has a precise meaning. Using the number.... CO-1620E24M-T as an example: CO is the breed identifier (in this case for Collie); 1620 is the ascending numerical order of normal individuals assigned a breed registry number; E stands for Excellent; 24 is the age in months when the x-rays were taken; M is for the sex of the dog and T stands for tattoo. An OFA number is good for the entire lifetime of the dog, but OFA reserves the right to correct or revoke any number.

Further information on OFA may be obtained by writing or calling: OFA at 2300 E. Nifong Blvd, Columbia MO 65201-3806, telephone 1-573-442-0418; Also information may be obtained from The American Kennel Club, at 1-919-233-9767. Here is a link to the OFA WEBSITE: <http://www.offa.org/index.html>

*Reprinted from the April 1998 Collie Club of America Bulletin