

Your Cavalier King Charles Spaniel

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



Cavalier King Charles Spaniels: What a Unique Breed!

Your dog is special! She's your best friend and companion and a source of unconditional love. Chances are that you chose her because you like Cavalier King Charles spaniels, and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- A snuggly lap dog and true companion
- Willing to please and responsive to positive reinforcement
- Affectionate, easygoing, and sweet
- Good with children and other pets
- Agile and athletic—readily participates in outdoor activities

No dog is perfect, though, and you may have noticed these characteristics, too:

- Prone to separation anxiety and associated barking and chewing behaviors
- Long coat sheds quite a bit and needs to be brushed regularly
- Has a tendency toward shyness and fear-based aggression if not socialized properly
- Strong prey drive—will chase and grab small things that run
- Prone to several health problems, including early heart disease

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's got her own personality, and you love her for it.



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Your Cavalier King Charles Spaniel's Health

We know that because you care so much about your dog, you want to take good care of him. That's why we'll tell you about the health concerns we'll be discussing with you over the life of your Cavie.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they're related to your pet's breed. That doesn't mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that he's more at risk than other dogs. We'll describe the most common issues for Cavalier King Charles spaniels to give you an idea of what may come up. Of course we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide, and the health evaluation schedule it contains, helps us and you plan for your pet's health-care needs. At the end of the booklet, we've included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Cavalier looking and feeling his best. You'll know what to watch for, and we'll all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

Cancer

Cancer is the most common cause of death of dogs in their golden years, including your pal. Half of all cancers are cured by surgically removing them, and some types are treatable with chemotherapy. Early detection is critical! We'll do periodic blood tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet. If she is overweight, we'll discuss exercise and diet because obesity is a risk factor for some types of cancer.

Cataracts

Cataracts are a common cause of blindness in older Cavaliers. We'll watch for the lenses of his eyes to become

more opaque—meaning they look cloudy instead of clear—when we examine him. Many dogs adjust well to losing their vision and get along just fine. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight is an option.

Dental Disease

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. It starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't prevent or treat dental disease, your buddy will lose her teeth and be in danger of damaging her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, the disease could shorten your pet's life by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.

Dry Eye

Dry eye, also known as keratoconjunctivitis sicca or KCS, is a disease common in Cavalier King Charles spaniels. The tear glands no longer produce enough tears to keep the eye moist, which results in eye sores and infections. Ouch! Symptoms include a thick discharge, squinting, pawing at the eye, or a dull, dry look instead of a glistening, shiny eye. This is a painful condition; please call us immediately if you notice any of these signs. We'll conduct a tear test when we examine her and, if she has this disease, we'll prescribe ointment that you'll need to apply for the rest of your dog's life.

Eye Injuries

Because your Cavie has eyeballs that bulge, he is particularly susceptible to having his eye pop out of the socket (called proptosis). It's a truly horrifying sight! It happens when there is too much pressure or squeezing on the neck, such as from a choke chain. If surgery is completed within a few hours and the eye doesn't get injured while it's exposed, the eyeball can usually be replaced with no loss of vision. You must use a harness and not a neck collar when walking your pet, and never use a choke chain. Straining against a leash can raise the pressure on the eye, making it more likely that this will happen to your friend.

Heart Disease

Cavaliers are prone to two genetically linked types of heart failure: mitral valve disease and dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM). DCM is a condition where the heart becomes so large, thin, and weak that it can no longer effectively pump blood to the body. Watch for your friend acting weak or tired, fainting or collapsing, breathing in a labored way, or coughing. Mitral valve disease is a leading cause of death of Cavies, and in fact half of them will develop the disease by age five. It is caused by deterioration of a valve in the heart. We'll perform diagnostic tests to check for heart disease starting when your dog is a young adult. If heart disease is diagnosed early, we may be able to prescribe



medications that could prolong her life for many years. Remember that proper dental care and weight control go a long way in preventing heart disease.

Infections

Cavalier King Charles spaniels are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections—the same ones that all dogs can get—such as parvovirus, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through vaccination, which we'll administer to your dog based on the diseases we see in our area, his age, and other factors.

Obesity

Obesity is a significant health problem in dogs and a serious disease that may cause arthritis, some types of cancer, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal food when she looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can love her to death with human food and treats.

Parasites

All kinds of worms and bugs can invade your dog's body, inside and out. Everything from fleas to ticks to ear mites can infest his skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, heartworms, and whipworms can get into his system in any number of ways: drinking unclean water, eating or stepping on feces, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventative medication as necessary to keep him healthy.

Respiratory Distress Syndrome

This disease, also known as brachycephalic syndrome, affects dogs with a short nose, like your Cavalier King Charles spaniel. She has the same amount of tissue in her nose and throat as other dogs, but there's no place for it to go. As a consequence, the soft palate, the soft part of the

back of the roof of the mouth, can be too long and may hang down into the airway. Cavalier King Charles spaniels' nostrils are often too small, and sometimes the trachea, or windpipe, is narrow and undersized. All these things lead to a narrow and obstructed airway. Some of these dogs can barely breathe! Watch for exercise intolerance, loud breathing, coughing, bluish gums, and fainting. Ideally, we'll correct the problem surgically early on when we spay or neuter your dog, but we can also complete the surgery later in life if necessary.

With her short nose, she is also more likely to develop other problems, such as flatulence from excessive air intake, pneumonia from aspirating food, and heat stroke. Being overweight also increases the likelihood of breathing problems, so be sure to keep her on the trim side.

Skin Infections

Your Cavie is prone to a form of skin infection called lip-fold pyoderma, which occurs because the folds of skin along the lower jaw are usually moist. Bacteria can readily gain a foothold and cause a reddened, smelly area that is uncomfortable for your dog. We will check for this condition upon examination, but let us know if you see signs. We'll recommend treatment with ointments and antibiotics as necessary. When symptoms are severe, the excess skin folds can be surgically removed.

Spaying or Neutering

One of the best things you can do for your Cavalier King Charles spaniel is to have him neutered (called spaying in females). In males, this means we surgically remove the testicles, and in females, it means we surgically remove the uterus and ovaries. Spaying or neutering decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to evaluate and possibly address some of the diseases your Cavie is likely to develop. This is convenient for you and easy for your friend. Don't worry; we'll let you know what specific problems we'll look for when the time arrives.

Taking Care of Your Cavalier King Charles Spaniel at Home

Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch his diet, make sure he gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush his teeth and coat, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for him. This is when we’ll give him the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Cavies. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures he will need throughout his life, and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your Cavalier King Charles spaniel live longer, stay healthy, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine. Overweight Cavies are more prone to cancer, heart disease, arthritis, and other problems.

- ✓ Brush her coat at least weekly.
- ✓ Brush her teeth at least three times a week.
- ✓ Keep your dog’s diet consistent, and don’t give her people food.
- ✓ Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
- ✓ Exercise your dog regularly, and don’t overdo exercise.

What to Watch For

Give us a call immediately if you notice any of these signs in your Cavalier King Charles spaniel:

- ✓ Vomiting or chronic diarrhea
- ✓ Weight loss or weight gain
- ✓ Lumps, bumps, and moles
- ✓ Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- ✓ Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- ✓ Limping or lameness
- ✓ Hair loss
- ✓ Coughing or difficulty breathing
- ✓ Episodes of weakness
- ✓ Pot-belly appearance
- ✓ Inability or straining to urinate
- ✓ Cloudiness, redness, itching or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- ✓ Itchy skin (scratching or licking)
- ✓ Change in appetite or water consumption

- ✓ Scratching or shaking the head, or discharge in the ear
- ✓ Redness or a foul odor about the lips
- ✓ Gums that are not pink
- ✓ Fainting or collapsing

Partners in Health Care

DNA testing is a rapidly advancing field with tests being developed to help diagnose conditions before they become problems for your friend. For the most up-to-date information on DNA and other screening tests available for your pal, visit www.Genesis4Pets.com.

Your Cavalier King Charles spaniel counts on you to take good care of him, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that he lives a long and healthy life. Our goal is to ensure that your pal has the best health care possible: health care that's based on his breed, lifestyle, and age. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns.

Health Evaluation Schedule for Cavalier King Charles Spaniels

Now that you’ve read about the health issues we’ll be monitoring, we wanted to give you an at-a-glance summary of what services we’ll provide to keep your Cavie happy and healthy. It may seem like your pet is prone to quite a few problems, but don’t worry; we’ll take the lead in keeping her healthy for a lifetime. We’ll review these health-care steps with you in more detail, but please feel free to ask questions or voice concerns at any time.

Studies to determine the frequency of inheritance or disease in this breed either have not been completed or are inconclusive. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we’ve described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed.



How We'll Keep Your Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Healthy

*Puppy to Adolescent:
Infant to 17 in People Years*

*Adult: 18 to 39
in People Years*

*Senior: 40 to 59
in People Years*

*Senior: 40 to 59
in People Years*

(v)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Cavalier King Charles Spaniel-Specific Problems We're Looking For
○	6–8 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Internal parasite test and/or deworming Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care	Heart murmurs Hernias Proper dental alignment Parasites
○	10–12 weeks	Brief physical examination Heartworm prevention Vaccinations Discuss caring for your dog's teeth at home	Proper growth rate Behavioral problems Parasites
○	14–16 weeks	Brief physical examination Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss obedience training, nail trimming, and grooming Schedule spay/neuter surgery	Adult teeth coming in properly Skin infections Tonsillitis Parasites
○	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Presurgical diagnostics for spay or neuter surgery Soft palate surgery	Internal organ health prior to spay/neuter surgery Respiratory distress syndrome
○	1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Heartworm test Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss diet, weight, and exercise	Skin infections Excessive weight gain Behavioral problems Heartworms and other parasites
○	2 years through 8 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Internal organ health evaluation Tear test Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Skin infections Dental disease Healthy weight Internal organ health and function Dry eye Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites
○	9 years through 11 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Senior internal organ health evaluation Tear test Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Skin infections Cataracts Dental disease Healthy weight Arthritis Internal organ health and function Dry eye Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites
○	12 years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Golden years internal organ health evaluation Cancer screen Tear test Glaucoma screen Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Skin infections Cataracts Dental disease Healthy weight Arthritis Internal organ health and function Signs of cancer Dry eye Glaucoma Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites

Note: We recommend twice-a-year examinations so that we may diagnose problems sooner. This approach also gives you the budget-friendly option of spreading preventive testing over two visits rather than one.