



Confidential health survey of the Hungarian Wirehaired Vizsla Association

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Part 1: Mortality and Lifespan



Confidential health survey of Hungarian Wirehaired Vizsla: Mortality and life span

Introduction

The Hungarian Wirehaired Vizsla (HWV) is thought to have originated in Hungary in the 1930s when German Wirehaired Pointers were crossed with Hungarian Vizslas to produce a hardier breed, more suited to work in water and rough conditions (Hungarian Wirehaired Vizsla Association, 2008).

This survey was conceived in collaboration with the Hungarian Wirehaired Vizsla Association (HWVA), to look in more depth at conditions in the breed which were highlighted in the 2004 Purebred Dog Health Survey.

Methods

The survey forms were created using a questionnaire design package (Cardiff TELEform[®]). The questions were developed and refined specifically for the breed over several months and there were numerous iterations of the questionnaire before the final version was created.

Survey packs were sent out to members of the HWVA and other known owners/breeders of Hungarian Wirehaired Vizslas in the UK from May to December 2009. The survey pack contained:

1. Main survey form, 1 per live Hungarian Wirehaired Vizsla.
2. Mortality form, 1 per 4 Hungarian Wirehaired Vizslas which had died.
3. Owner & vet details form.
4. Covering letter with tear-off slip to request additional forms.
5. Glossary of possible conditions and definitions.
6. Self-addressed postage-paid reply envelope.

Owners of HWVs who were not members of the HWVA were able to contact the Animal Health Trust (AHT) to take part in the survey with their HWVs. Reminder cards were sent out at the beginning of August 2009.

This report relates to the mortality form, on which owners were asked to report all deaths of Hungarian Wirehaired Vizslas they had owned. Information requested included the HWV's registered name, date of birth, date of death and/or age at death, cause of death, whether the HWV died or was euthanised and whether a post mortem examination was performed. Owners were asked to be as specific as possible when reporting cause of death and we suggested contacting their veterinary surgeon if they had difficulty remembering. Returned questionnaires were scanned and verified using specialised information capture software (Cardiff TELEform[®]). The scanned and verified data were exported into an Access[®] (Microsoft) database for checking and recoding and from there were exported to an Excel[®] (Microsoft) spreadsheet for analysis. Diagnostic categories were developed for cause of death by firstly grouping diseases by organ system affected. Organ system categories included cardiac, hepatic and respiratory. Additional categories were included for cancer and gastric dilatation volvulus syndrome (GDV), and remaining causes of death were recorded individually. A category for "old age" was used when either age or old age was stated as the cause of death. Average age at death is reported as median (minimum – maximum) as is appropriate for skewed data. T tests or nonparametric equivalents were used to compare age at death due to different causes.

Results

In total 30 deaths were reported between 1993 and 2009, but only 29 were included in the analysis – the dog for which neither age at death nor dates of birth and death had not been provided could not be used. Twenty Hungarian Wirehaired Vizslas had been euthanised at a median age of 9 years and 10 months (2 years – 15 years) and 9 died at a median age of 8 years and 5 months (2 years and 6 months – 12 years and 8 months) and 2 HWVs were not specified as having died or been euthanised. Median age at death overall was 9 years and 5 months (1 year and 2 months - 15 years). Half of the Hungarian Wirehaired Vizslas in this survey were still alive at 9 years of age, and 20% were still alive at 11 years of age (Figure 1). A post mortem examination had been performed on only 2 Hungarian Wirehaired Vizslas, one of whom had died of pneumonia and the other had been euthanised due to osteosarcoma. The three most frequently reported causes of death were cancer (55%), "old age" (10%) and GDV (10%) (Table 1, Figure 2).

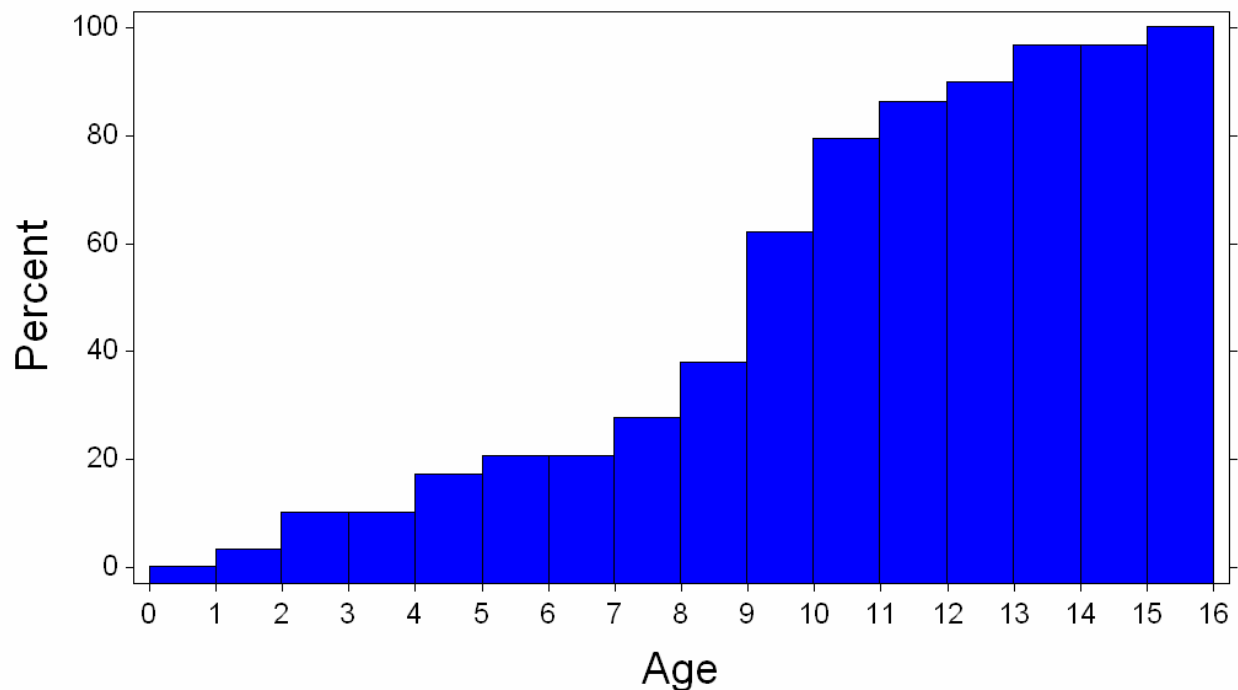


Figure 1: Cumulative distribution of deaths by age.

Table 1. Cause of death/reason for euthanasia and age at death in descending order of total number of deaths.

Cause of death	Number of HWVs		Total number of deaths	Age at death		
	Died	Euthanised		Median	Minimum	Maximum
Cancer ¹	1	15	16	9.83	2.0	13.83
“Old age”	1	2	3	13.92	12.67	15.0
GDV	2	1	3	8.0	7.75	9.0
Cardiac ²	0	2	2	7.33	5.17	9.42
Hepatic (liver disease)	1	0	1	8.42		
Respiratory (pneumonia)	1	0	1	2.5		
Aneurysm	1	0	1	9.92		
Addison’s disease	1	0	1	4.58		
“Heartbreak”	1	0	1	9.0		
TOTAL	9	20	29	9.42	2.0	15.0

¹ 2 haemangiosarcoma, 2 lung cancer, 1 lymphoma, 1 lymphoma & skin cancer, 1 osteosarcoma, 1 cerebellar tumour, 1 brain tumour, 1 adrenal gland tumour, 1 cardiac tumour, 1 tumour on spleen or liver, 1 cancer of spleen & stomach, 1 liver cancer, 1 type & location unspecified.

² 1 cardiac valvular disease, 1 dilated cardiomyopathy.

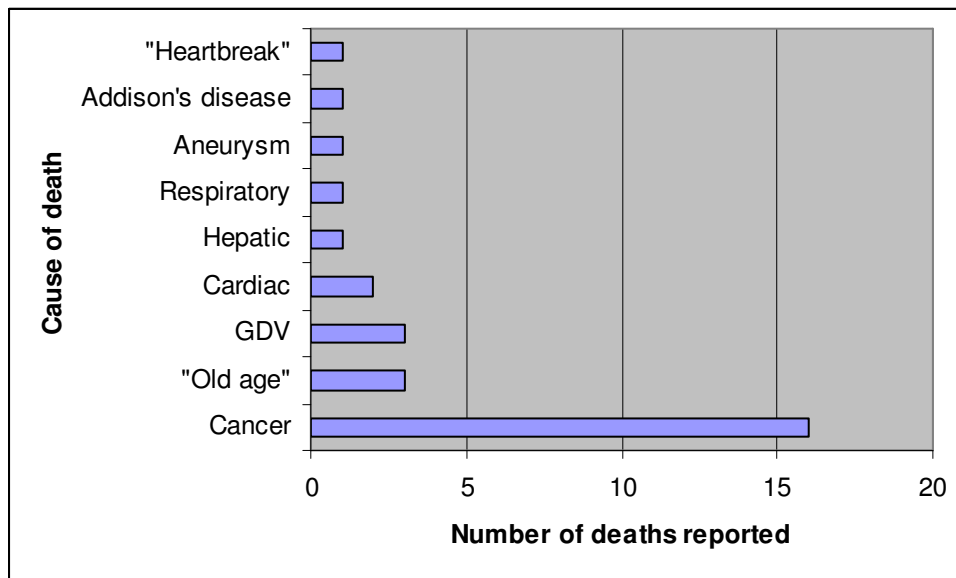


Figure 2: Number of deaths due to different disease conditions in 29 Hungarian Wirehaired Vizslas.

Discussion

These results are similar to those of the 2004 survey of mortality in the Hungarian Wirehaired Vizsla (Table 2) (The Kennel Club, 2006). The similar proportional mortality rates and overlapping 95% confidence intervals for the frequency of cancer as a cause of death in the two surveys suggest that the frequency has not increased significantly since 2004.

Table 2. Comparison of these results with previous survey:

Reported results	2004 Purebred Dog Health Survey	2009 Confidential health survey of the HWVA
Number of deaths reported	15	29
Median age at death (years)	9.83	9.42
Maximum age at death (years)	15.0	15.0
Minimum age at death (years)	2.0	1.17
Top 4 causes of death	% proportional mortality with 95% CIs	% proportional mortality with 95% CIs
	1 Cancer (47%; 95% CIs 22-73%)	Cancer (55%; 95% CIs 35-73%)
	2 "Old age" (13%; 95% CIs 2-42%)	"Old age" (10%; 95% CIs 2-29%)
	3 Cardiac (13%; 95% CIs 2-42%)	GDV (10%; 95% CIs 2-29%)
	4 Dermatologic (7%; 95% CIs 0-34)	Cardiac (7%; 95% CIs 1-24%)

Cancer is often considered to be a condition associated with aging, however the median age at death due to cancer (9 years and 10 months) was significantly lower than that for “old age” (13 years and 11 months). It is difficult to comment on the other causes of death due to the low reported frequencies of occurrence. There would be value in monitoring causes of death within the breed to establish trends.

While there are many understandable reasons why owners may choose not to have a post mortem examination performed on their pet when it has died, the more accurate information about cause of death that the results of such examinations can provide would be invaluable for future studies of Hungarian Wirehaired Vizsla health.

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