

10 Questions For Cavalier Breeders

Here is a list of the ten most important questions to ask any breeder of cavalier King Charles spaniels about their breeding practices. It is best to orally ask these questions directly to the breeder, instead of e-mailing or faxing the list. If the breeder reacts in an impatient or hostile manner to any of these questions, then you know all you need to know about that breeder.

See our [TOP 10: Cavalier Breeders' Worst Excuses](#) webpage to be prepared for some of the outrageous reactions to expect from some breeders.

The name of each disorder below is hyper-linked to the page of our website which discusses the disorder in detail.



In General

1. What are the registered names of the puppy's parents, and may I have copies of the registration certificates for both parents?

The parents' (sire and dam) names and registration certificates (as registered with the American Kennel Club or the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club, U.S.A., the two breed registries for cavaliers in the United States), will enable you to research the parents on genetic disease registration websites, such as [OFA \(Orthopedic Foundation for Animals\)](#) and [Canine Health Information](#), and also provide pedigree information about the ancestors of the breeding parents.

2. What are the birth dates of the puppy's parents?

This information will tell you whether the parents were bred too early. No cavalier King Charles spaniel should be bred before age 5 years under the [MVD Breeding Protocol](#), unless each parent meets the 2.5 year exception under that Protocol, and no cavalier should be bred before age 2.5 years under the [SM Breeding Protocol](#). You should not purchase any cavalier if either of its parents does not meet these minimum ages.

[Mitral Valve Disease \(MVD\)](#)

3. Has the breeder complied with the [MVD Breeding Protocol](#)?

If the answer to this question is "No", then you should not purchase a cavalier from that breeder. MVD is far too pervasive a genetic disease among cavalier King Charles spaniels to risk purchasing one whose parents and grandparents have not been cleared of mitral valve murmurs by board certified cardiologists. The verbal information you receive from the breeder should be backed up with copies of the examining documents, signed by the cardiologists. The dates of the examinations of the parents should be as recent as possible and certainly no older than six months before the date of the birth of the cavalier you are considering purchasing.

Now, be careful not to be fooled by breeders who may claim to be following a MVD breeding protocol which turns out not to be the MVD Breeding Protocol. Some breeders have made up their own watered-down breeding protocol (something like: "try to breed" females over 2 years of age and MVD-clear, to males over 6 years and MVD-clear), which makes breeding decisions much easier for them, but which totally ignores the many years of statistical research and specialists' recommendations which has led to the MVD Breeding Protocol.

Syringomyelia (SM)

4. Has the breeder complied with the SM Breeding Protocol?

If the answer to this question is "No", then you should not purchase a cavalier from that breeder.

Hip Dysplasia (HD)

5. Have both parents' hips been x-rayed after age 2 years, and have those x-rays been evaluated and cleared of HD by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA)?

If the answer to this question is "No", then you should not purchase a cavalier from that breeder. The verbal information you receive from the breeder should be backed up with copies of the OFA certificates. "My vet okayed the x-ray" is NOT a valid clearance. Final hip clearances cannot be obtained until dogs are two years of age. Some breeders will do a preliminary test when their breeding stock is under 2 years, but it will not be certified by OFA. OFA's website is www.ofa.org

Patellar Luxation

6. Have both parents' patellas (knees) been examined and cleared by qualified veterinarians within a year before the date of birth of the Cavalier you are considering purchasing?

If the answer to this question is "No", then you should not purchase a cavalier from that breeder. The verbal information you receive from the breeder should be backed up with copies of the examining documents, signed by the veterinarians.

Eyes - Vision - Sight

7. Have both parents' eyes been examined and cleared of serious genetic eye disorders by board certified veterinary ophthalmologists within a year before the date of birth of the Cavalier you are considering purchasing?

If the answer to this question is "No", then you should not purchase a cavalier from that breeder. Those serious genetic eye disorders include [hereditary cataracts](#), [corneal dystrophy](#), [dry eye syndrome](#), [microphthalmia](#), [progressive retinal degeneration](#), and all but the mildest form of [retinal dysplasia](#). No breeding pair both should

be affected with [distichiasis](#) or with [entropion](#). The verbal information you receive from the breeder should be backed up with copies of the examining documents on forms supplied by OFA and signed by the board certified veterinary ophthalmologists.

[Hearing](#)

8. Have both parents' [hearing](#) been tested and cleared of hereditary hearing deficiencies, preferably by the Brainstem Auditory Evoked Response (BAER) test, no earlier than at age 2.5 years?

If the answer to this question is "No", then you should not purchase a cavalier from that breeder. The verbal information you receive from the breeder should be backed up with copies of the testing documents signed by the examining veterinarians.

[Episodic Falling Syndrome](#) & [Curly Coat Syndrome](#)

9. Have both parents' DNA been tested for [episodic falling syndrome \(EFS\)](#) and for [curly coat syndrome](#)?

You should not purchase a cavalier from a breeder, unless the breeder has obtained, and shown to you, a DNA test result showing that at least one parent is clear of the mutated gene causing EFS and of the mutated gene causing curly coat.

Blood Tests

10. Have both parents' blood been tested and cleared for [diabetes mellitus](#) and [hypothyroidism](#) within a year before the date of birth of the cavalier you are considering purchasing?

If the answer to any part of this question is "No", then you should seriously consider not purchasing a cavalier from that breeder. The verbal information you receive from the breeder should be backed up with copies of the blood test reports prepared by qualified blood testing services.

Related Links

[Breeders](#)
[Top Ten Cavalier Breeders' Worst Excuses](#)
[Canine Health Testing Clinics](#)

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