

# Your Cardigan Welsh Corgi

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



[TheHappyPetVet.com](http://TheHappyPetVet.com)

[Contact@TheHappyPetVet.com](mailto:Contact@TheHappyPetVet.com)

541-262-4133

Your Cardigan Welsh Corgi

## Cardigan Welsh Corgis: What a Unique Breed!

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

- Good with kids and other pets
- Easily motivated and trainable
- Devoted, loyal, and protective
- Even-tempered; adapts to a wide variety of environments
- Vigilant watchdog with a ready bark
- Has a short, easy-to-care-for coat

However, no dog is perfect! You may have also noticed these characteristics:

- Prone to boredom and separation anxiety when left alone and may find trouble
- Willful and stubborn if you don't show strong leadership
- Needs a lot of activity and mental stimulation to avoid boredom vices
- Has a tendency to herd, including small children
- Sheds quite a bit
- Standoffish toward strangers

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's full of personality, and you love her for it! The Cardigan Welsh Corgi is a big dog in a small package. She enjoys herding and agility activities as well as quality time with her family.

The Cardigan Welsh Corgi or "the Corgi with a tail" originated in Wales around 1200 BC and is one of the oldest known dog breeds. They were bred for guarding, managing cattle, and vermin hunting. Corgis are short and low to the ground to protect them from the kicks of cattle—cow hooves fly right over their heads. The Cardigan is an affectionate



© 2013 VetThink, Inc.





## General Health Information for your Cardigan Welsh Corgi

### *Dental Disease*

**Dental disease** is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your Cardigan Welsh Corgi is more likely than other dogs to have problems with her teeth. Dental disease 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 may lose her teeth and be in danger of damage to her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, your Cardigan Welsh Corgi's life span may even be cut short 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.

### *Infections*

Cardigan Welsh Corgis are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections — the same ones that all dogs can get — such as **parvo**, **rabies**, and **distemper**. Many of these infections are preventable through vaccination, which we will recommend based on her age, the diseases we see in our area, and other factors.

### *Obesity*

**Obesity** can be a significant health problem in Cardigan Welsh Corgis. It is a serious disease that may cause or worsen joint problems, metabolic and digestive disorders, 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 leftover people food and doggie treats. Instead, give her a hug, brush her fur or teeth, play a game with her, or perhaps take her for a walk. She'll feel better, and so will you!

### *Parasites*

All kinds of worms and bugs can invade your Cardigan's body, inside and out. Everything from fleas and ticks to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, heartworms, and whipworms can get into her system in a number of ways: drinking unclean water, walking on contaminated soil, 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 canine 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 preventive medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

### *Spay or Neuter*

One of the best things you can do for your Corgi is to have her spayed (neutered for males). In females, this means we surgically remove the ovaries and usually the uterus, and in males, it means we surgically remove the testicles. 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 identify and address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. For example, if your pet needs hip X-rays or a puppy tooth extracted, this would be a good time—it's more convenient for

and active companion that excels in herding and agility competitions. Corgis are a generally healthy breed with an average lifespan of 12-15 years.

## Your Cardigan Welsh Corgi's Health

We know that because you care so much about your dog, you want to take good care of her. That is why we have summarized the health concerns we will be discussing with you over the life of your Corgi. By knowing about health concerns specific to Cardigan Welsh Corgis, we can tailor a preventive health plan to watch for and hopefully prevent some predictable risks.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they are related to your pet's breed. 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. That does not mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that she is more at risk than other dogs. We will describe the most common issues seen in Cardigan Welsh Corgis to give you an idea of what may come up in her future. Of course, we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide contains general health information important to all canines as well as the most important genetic predispositions for Cardigan Welsh Corgis. This information helps you and us together plan for your pet's unique medical needs. At the end of the booklet, we have also included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Cardigan looking and feeling her best. You will know what to watch for, and we will all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

you and easier on your friend too. Routine blood testing prior to surgery also helps us to identify and take precautions against common problems that increase anesthetic or surgical risk. Don't worry; we'll discuss the specific problems we will be looking for when the time arrives.

## Genetic Predispositions for Cardigan Welsh Corgis

### Back Problems

**Intervertebral disc disease (IVDD)** is a common condition in dogs with long backs and short legs, including Corgis. The disease is caused when the jelly-like cushion between one or more vertebrae slips or ruptures, causing the disc to press on the spinal cord. If your dog is suddenly unable or unwilling to jump or go up stairs, is reluctant to move around, has a hunched back, cries out, or refuses to eat or go potty, he is likely in severe pain. He may even experience sudden paralysis—he may drag his back feet or be unable to get up or use his back legs. If you see these symptoms, don't wait! Call us or an emergency clinic immediately! In many cases involving paralysis, we'll recommend surgical removal of the ruptured discs (within 24 hours of the onset of symptoms for the best results). For less severe cases, rest and medication may resolve the problem. And as with so many other diseases, weight control helps reduce the risk of IVDD. You should also provide ramps or steps for your pet from puppyhood on to prevent your dog from stressing his back by jumping on and off of the furniture.

### Eye Problems

Not many things have as dramatic an impact on your dog's quality of life as the proper functioning of his eyes. Unfortunately, Cardigan Welsh Corgis can inherit or develop a number of different eye conditions, some of which may cause blindness if not treated right away, and most of which can be extremely painful! We will evaluate his eyes at every examination to look for any signs for concern.

- **Cataracts** are a common cause of blindness in older Corgis. 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 may also be an option.
- **Glaucoma**, an eye condition that affects Cardigan Welsh Corgis and people too, is an extremely painful disease that rapidly leads to blindness if left untreated. Symptoms include squinting, watery eyes, bluing of the cornea (the clear front part of the eye), and redness in the whites of the eyes. Pain is rarely noticed by pet owners though it is frequently there and can be severe. People who have certain types of glaucoma often report it feels like being stabbed in the eye with an ice pick! Yikes! In advanced cases, the eye may look enlarged or swollen like it's bulging. We'll perform an annual glaucoma screening to diagnose and start treatment as early as possible. Glaucoma is a medical emergency. If you see symptoms,

don't wait to call us, go to an emergency clinic!

- **Distichiasis** is a condition caused by extra hairs that grow inside of the eyelid and rub on the surface of the eye. This is one of the most commonly inherited diseases in dogs, and your Corgi is more likely than other dogs to develop this painful condition. If untreated, these abnormal hairs can cause corneal ulcers and chronic eye pain. Several treatment options are available, and the prognosis is good once the hairs have been permanently removed.
- **Primary lens luxation (PLL)** is an inherited disease, common in Corgis, that causes the tiny fibers that hold the lens suspended within the eye to degrade and break. When these fibers break, the lens drops out of place. If the lens falls forward, it can block normal circulation in the eye and cause secondary glaucoma. Surgery to remove the loose lens may be needed to relieve your pet's pain.
- **Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA)** is an inherited disease in which the eyes are genetically programmed to go blind. Unfortunately, Corgis are a bit more likely than other dogs to have this condition. PRA is not painful, but also not curable. In dogs with this gene, early symptoms such as night blindness or dilated pupils generally begin around three to five years of age. A genetic test is available for this condition.
- Sometimes small strands of tissue meant to disappear soon after birth remain attached to the iris. This condition is called persistent pupillary membrane, and your Corgi is more likely to have this condition than other dogs. Fortunately, these tissue bits usually don't hurt or impede vision, but can occasionally cause secondary problems.

### Bladder or Kidney Stones

There are a few different types of stones that can form in the kidney or in the bladder, and Cardigan Welsh Corgis are more likely to develop them than other breeds. We'll periodically test his urine for telltale signs indicating the presence of kidney and bladder stones, which in addition are very painful! If your buddy has blood in his urine, can't urinate, or is straining to urinate, it is a medical emergency. Call us immediately!

### Hip and Elbow Dysplasia

Both hips and elbows are at risk for **dysplasia**, an inherited disease that causes the joints to develop improperly and results in arthritis. Stiffness in your Corgi's elbows or hips may become a problem for him, especially as he matures. You may notice that he begins to show lameness in his legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. We can treat the arthritis—the sooner the better—to minimize discomfort and pain. We'll take X-rays of your dog's bones to identify issues as early as possible. Surgery is also sometimes a good option in severe and life-limiting cases. And keep in mind that overweight dogs may develop arthritis years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue pain and suffering!

### Degenerative Myelopathy

**Degenerative myelopathy** is a neurologic condition, similar to ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease in people, that causes weakness and poor nerve function in the hind legs. It affects Corgis more frequently than other breeds. If your dog has this disease, he



bloodlines, so if his ears are healthy and he's still ignoring you, a more thorough hearing workup may be needed, including brainwave analysis, if indicated. If you suspect he may not be hearing as well as he should, schedule an appointment with us right away as the problem could also be caused by a severe ear infection.

### *Enzyme Disorder*

[Methemoglobin reductase deficiency](#) is a disorder in which the body does not produce enough methemoglobin reductase, an enzyme necessary for the normal functioning of red blood cells. This disorder occurs at a greater frequency in Cardigan Welsh Corgis than other breeds, but in most cases, the disease is mild and causes no symptoms. In severe cases, affected pets may become weak from lack of oxygen and have a blue or brown tint to the gums. Your pet's enzyme levels can be measured to diagnose this problem and, if indicated, supportive care may be needed. There is no specific treatment or cure for this deficiency, and ingestion of onions or certain drugs can worsen symptoms. Like with all genetic disorders, affected dogs should not be bred.

## **Taking Care of Your Cardigan Welsh Corgi 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 her diet, make sure she gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush her 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 her. This is when we'll give her the necessary "check-ups" and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Corgis. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures she will need throughout her 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 Cardigan live longer, stay healthier, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine.

- ✓ Supervise your pet as you would a toddler. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as necessary. This will keep her out of trouble and away from objects she shouldn't put in her mouth.
- ✓ She needs a thorough brushing at least weekly most of the year. Twice a year she blows her coat and loses crazy amounts of hair; daily brushing is recommended during this time.
- ✓ Cardigan Welsh Corgis generally have good teeth, and you can keep them perfect by brushing them at least twice a week!
- ✓ Clean her ears weekly, even as a puppy. Don't worry—we'll show you how!
- ✓ She's a smart dog with lots of energy, so keep her mind

will become increasingly weak and disabled in the hind legs, eventually suffering from paralysis in his hindquarters, which also leads to incontinence. Rehabilitation, exercise, acupuncture, and dietary supplements can be helpful, but there is no cure for degenerative myelopathy. A genetic test is available to determine whether your dog is at risk for this heritable disease.

### *Reproductive Difficulties*

Breeds with a large head and small pelvis are more prone to difficulties during the birthing process. The female's pelvis may be too small to pass the puppies' heads and a C-section is often required for her health and that of her puppies. If you are interested in breeding your Corgi, speak with us first. We can help you make an informed decision based on the body conformations of both sire and dam.

### *Nerve Disease*

[Neuronal ceroid lipofuscinosis](#), or NCL, is a progressive neurologic disease found in several breeds, including Corgis. Clinical signs usually appear in younger dogs around one to three years of age, but can also develop later in life. In the early stages, rear leg weakness and imbalance can occur. Symptoms may progress to weakness involving all four legs, and some dogs also lose vision. There is currently no effective treatment for this disease, but a genetic test is available. Dogs carrying the mutation should not be used for breeding since it is readily passed to future generations.

### *Thyroid Problems*

Corgis are prone to a common condition called [hypothyroidism](#) in which the body doesn't make enough thyroid hormone. Signs can include dry skin and coat, hair loss, susceptibility to other skin diseases, weight gain, fearfulness, aggression, and other behavioral changes. We'll conduct a blood test annually to screen for this disease. Treatment is usually as simple as replacement hormones given in the form of a pill.

### *Deafness*

Heritable deafness has been noted in some Cardigan

and body active, or she'll get bored. That's when the naughty stuff starts.

- ✓ She is well suited to apartment life as long as she is given daily walks.
- ✓ She has short legs and a long back so be careful how you pick her up and don't let her jump down from furniture.
- ✓ 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, but don't overdo it at first.

### *What to Watch For*

Any abnormal symptom could be a sign of serious disease or it could just be a minor or temporary problem. The important thing is to be able to tell when to seek veterinary help and how urgently. Many diseases cause dogs to have a characteristic combination of symptoms, which together can be a clear signal that your Cardigan Welsh Corgi needs help.

### Office calls

Give us a call for an appointment if you notice any of these types of signs:

- ✓ Change in appetite or water consumption
- ✓ Tartar build-up, bad breath, red gums, or broken teeth
- ✓ Itchy skin (scratching, chewing, or licking); hair loss
- ✓ Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- ✓ Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- ✓ Dull coat, hair loss; sluggish, weight gain
- ✓ Easily startled, no reaction to unseen sounds

### Emergencies

Seek medical care immediately if you notice any of these types of signs:

- ✓ Scratching or shaking the head, tender ears, or ear discharge
- ✓ Inability or straining to urinate; discolored urine
- ✓ Cloudiness, redness, itching, or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- ✓ Unwilling to jump, pain, hunched back, paralysis
- ✓ General reluctance to run or play
- ✓ Dragging the hind toes and hind limb weakness



## Genetic/DNA Testing

DNA analysis is a rapidly advancing field in healthcare for people and pets'. Luckily, technologies exist to screen for hundreds of inherited diseases in pets, just like in people. By screening each pet for as many genetic diseases as possible, we will be better prepared to care for your pet throughout life. This is an important step in caring for your pet because it's always better to know your pal is at risk for a genetic disease before the problem is untreatable.

In an effort to screen for as many genetically linked diseases as possible, we may recommend the **Embark Health Genetic Screen** to screen for more than 150 genetic mutations that cause disease.

Each **Embark Health Genetic Screen** Screens for

- ✓ Over 30 Musculoskeletal Problems
- ✓ Over 30 Metabolic Conditions
- ✓ Over 30 Eye Conditions
- ✓ Over 25 Blood and Clotting Disorders
- ✓ Over 10 Immune System Diseases
- ✓ Over 10 Urinary Tract Problems
- ✓ 10 Skin and Hair Conditions
- ✓ Cancer
- ✓ Dental Disease
- ✓ Drug Metabolism
- ✓ Heart Problems
- ✓ Hormonal Conditions
- ✓ Liver/Gastrointestinal Diseases
- ✓ Midline Defect
- ✓ Neuromuscular Diseases
- ✓ Reproduction Problems
- ✓ Respiratory Conditions

This one-time test is one of the best decisions you can make for your Corgi's medical care. With less than a few drops of blood, we'll have a lifetime of information to assist us in providing the very best care of your friend's unique and individual needs throughout her life!

For more information about genetic testing, visit <http://embarkvet.com>

Your Corgi counts on you to take good care of her, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that she lives a long and healthy life. Our goal is to provide the best health care possible: health care that's based on her breed, lifestyle, and age. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns:

The Happy Pet Vet  
541-262-4133  
[www.TheHappyPetVet.com](http://www.TheHappyPetVet.com)  
[contact@TheHappyPetVet.com](mailto:contact@TheHappyPetVet.com)

### References:

- Ackerman L. The Genetic Connection: A Guide to Health Problems in Purebred Dogs. Second edition. AAHA Press; 2011.*
- Bell JS, Cavanagh KE, Tilley LP, Smith FW. Veterinary medical guide to dog and cat breeds. Jackson, Wyoming. Teton New Media; 2012.*
- Gough A, Thomas A. Breed Predispositions to Disease in Dogs and Cats. 2nd Edition. Wiley-Blackwell; 2010.*
- Crook A, Dawson S, Cote E, MacDonald S, Berry J. Canine Inherited Disorders Database [Internet]. University of Prince Edward Island. 2011. [cited 2013 Apr 11]. Available from: <http://ic.upei.ca/cidd/breed/cardigan-welsh-corgi>*
- Breed Specific Health Concerns [Internet]. American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundation, Inc. [cited 2013 Apr 11]. Available from: <http://www.akcchf.org/canine-health/breed-specific-concerns/?breed=cardigan-welsh-corgi>*

## Puppy to Adolescent Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Welsh Cardigan Corgi	Puppy to Adolescent: Infant to 17 in People Years			Corgi-Specific Problems We're Looking For
	(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	
	○	6–9 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination  Eye disease screen Neurological assessment Blood disorder evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Dental alignment, heart murmur, hernia Distichiasis and Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA) Deafness Methemoglobin reductase deficiency
	○	10–13 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Neurological assessment Blood disorder evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss caring for your dog's teeth and ears at home	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis and Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA) Deafness Methemoglobin reductase deficiency
	○	14–16 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Bone and joint exam Neurological assessment Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss obedience and grooming	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis and Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA) Hip dysplasia Deafness Methemoglobin reductase deficiency
	○	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Bone and joint exam Neurological assessment Blood disorder evaluation Pre-surgical diagnostics Discuss dystocia and microchipping	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis and Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA) Hip dysplasia Deafness Methemoglobin reductase deficiency
○	6 months to 1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Bone and joint exam Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss lifetime genetic considerations	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis and Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA) Hip dysplasia and Elbow dysplasia  All major diseases important in the breed with diagnostic plan	

## Adult to Golden Years Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Welsh Cardigan Corgi	(√)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Corgi-Specific Problems We're Looking For
	○	1 years through 8 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen  Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam  Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss behavior and nutrition Schedule spay/neuter after 1 year	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis, Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA), Cataracts, Glaucoma, and Primary lens luxation Urolithiasis Hypothyroidism Hip dysplasia, Elbow dysplasia, and Intervertebral disk disease (IVDD)
	○	9 years through 10 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam  Neurological assessment  Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts, Glaucoma, and Primary lens luxation Urolithiasis Hypothyroidism Hip dysplasia, Elbow dysplasia, and Intervertebral disk disease (IVDD) Degenerative myelopathy and Neuronal ceroid lipofuscinosis (NCL)
	○	11+ years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam  Neurological assessment  Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts, Glaucoma, and Primary lens luxation Urolithiasis Hypothyroidism Hip dysplasia, Elbow dysplasia, and Intervertebral disk disease (IVDD) Degenerative myelopathy and Neuronal ceroid lipofuscinosis (NCL)

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.