

# Your Smooth Fox Terrier

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



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Your Smooth Fox Terrier

## Smooth Fox Terriers: 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 Foxies and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Easily motivated and trainable
- Brave and ready for adventure
- Alert, curious, and busy
- Lively, with a friendly personality
- Excellent watchdog
- Devoted, loyal, and protective

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

- Has a tendency to escape, wander, and roam
- Likes to dig
- Can be independent and strong-willed
- Prone to boredom and separation anxiety when left alone and will find trouble
- Can be possessive of toys and food; tends to show dominance
- Has a tendency to bark quite a bit if not trained out of this habit

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's full of personality, and you love her for it! She is enthusiastic, playful, and feisty. The Smooth Fox Terrier is a lovable companion and family dog.

The Smooth Fox Terrier originated in Britain during the 17th century. They were bred to control mice and rats on farms and to hunt foxes by driving them from their underground dens. The SFT is a fearless and courageous hunting dog. Cheerful and scrappy, the Foxie is highly trainable—she is a skilled performer who loves to learn a new trick. Smooth



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## General Health Information for your Smooth Fox Terrier

### *Dental Disease*

**Dental disease** is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your Foxie 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 Foxie'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*

Smooth Fox Terriers 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 Smooth Fox Terriers. 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 Foxie'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 SFT 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 you and easier on your friend too. Routine blood testing prior to surgery also helps us to identify and take precautions against

Fox Terriers enjoy human attention but can be aggressive with other dogs. The Smooth Fox Terrier is a generally healthy breed with an average lifespan of 13-14 years.

## Your Smooth Fox Terrier'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 SFT. By knowing about health concerns specific to Smooth Fox Terriers, 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 Smooth Fox Terriers 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 Smooth Fox Terriers. 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 Foxie 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.

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 Smooth Fox Terriers

### 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, Smooth Fox Terriers 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 SFTs. 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 Smooth Fox Terriers 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!
- **Primary lens luxation (PLL)** is an inherited disease, common in Foxies, 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.

### Neurological Disease

A genetically linked neurological condition, known as wobbler disease or **wobbler syndrome**, causes a wobbly, drunken gait in affected pets. Wobbler disease is the result of a narrowing of the vertebrae in the neck that pinches the spinal cord and associated nerves. When pinched, the nerves do not send signals to the brain as they should causing the pet to be unable to feel his feet. The first signs you will often notice with wobbler disease are unstable hind legs, stumbling, and sometimes falling. Treatment options include medications, neck braces, rehabilitation exercise programs, and surgery.

### Knee Problems

Sometimes your SFT's kneecap (patella) may slip out of place. This is called **patellar luxation**. You might notice that your pet,

while running, suddenly picks up a back leg or skips and hops for a few strides. He might then kick his leg out sideways to pop the kneecap back in place. These are common signs of patellar luxation. If the problem is mild and involves only one leg, your friend may not require much treatment beyond arthritis medication. When symptoms are severe, surgery may be needed to realign the kneecap to keep it from luxating further.

### 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 SFT'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!

- Young Smooth Fox Terriers may be prone to a painful degenerative hip condition called **Legg-Calve-Perthes disease**. The exact cause of this condition is still not completely understood, but it is thought to be caused by a reduced blood supply to the hip, which causes the femoral head (the top of the thigh bone) to become brittle and fracture easily. Usually occurring between six and nine months of age, LCP causes pain and lameness in one or both rear legs, and often requires surgery.

### Heart Disease

Heart failure is a leading cause of death among Smooth Fox Terriers in their golden years. Most heart disease in dogs is caused by the weakening or slow deformity of heart valves such that they no longer close tightly; blood then leaks back around these weakened valves, straining the heart. Pets with heart valve disease (sometimes called **mitral valve disease**) have a heart murmur. If your dog has a heart murmur or outward signs suggesting heart problems, we'll perform testing to determine the severity of the disease. The same tests will need to be repeated at least every year to monitor the condition. If heart valve disease is diagnosed early, we may be able to prescribe medications that could prolong your pet's life for many years. Veterinary dental care and fatty acid supplementation can also help prevent heart disease, and weight control can help diminish symptoms.

- Smooth Fox Terriers may inherit a heart condition known as **pulmonic stenosis**. This disease causes a partial obstruction in the blood flow between the heart and the lungs, which means the heart must work extra hard to pump enough blood through the obstruction to the lungs. If the condition is severe, your dog may faint or seem to run out of energy during exercise. He may also have difficulty breathing, cough frequently, or have stunted growth. We'll test for this disease if your pet has any of these symptoms and discuss treatment options with you if the condition is indicated. Surgery is an option when symptoms are severe.





## Allergies

In humans, allergies to pollen, mold, or dust make people sneeze. In dogs, rather than sneezing, allergies make their skin itchy. We call this skin allergy “[atopy](#)”, and SFTs often have it. The feet, belly, folds of the skin, and ears are most commonly affected. Symptoms typically start between the ages of one and three and can get worse every year. Licking the paws, rubbing the face, and frequent ear infections are the most common signs of allergies. The good news is that there are many treatment options available for these conditions.

## Skin Infections

Your Foxie is susceptible to various kinds of skin infections and diseases. One type, [Malassezia dermatitis](#), is caused by a kind of yeast. When this yeast infects the ears, it causes itching, redness, and an accumulation of brown, waxy discharge. On the skin, this yeast leads to greasy, hairless areas, especially on the neck and throat, with a characteristic odor. Bathing with special shampoos and rinses may be helpful, and we’ll treat any underlying problems such as allergies as well. The earlier you call to have your pet’s skin problems checked, the less likely you will end up with an itchy, bald, smelly dog.

## Bladder or Kidney Stones

There are a few different types of stones that can form in the kidney or in the bladder, and Smooth Fox Terriers 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!

## Epilepsy

There are three types of [seizures](#) in dogs: reactive, secondary, and primary. Reactive seizures are caused by the brain’s reaction to a metabolic problem like low blood sugar, organ failure, or a toxin. Secondary seizures are the result of a brain tumor, stroke, or trauma. If no other cause can be found, the disease is called primary or idiopathic epilepsy. This problem is often an inherited condition, and Smooth Fox Terriers are commonly afflicted. If your friend is prone to seizures, episodes will usually begin between six months and three years of age. An initial diagnostic workup may help find the cause. Lifelong medication is usually necessary to help keep seizures under control with periodic blood testing required to monitor side effects and efficacy. If your dog has a seizure, carefully prevent him from injuring himself, but don’t try to control his mouth or tongue. It won’t help him, and he may bite you accidentally! Note the length of the seizure, and call us or an emergency hospital.

## Dental Abnormalities

Teeth abnormalities are often genetically induced and are relatively common in dogs, especially in purebred dogs like your SFT. An overbite or underbite is called a malocclusion or a bad bite. Oligodontia is a condition in which only a few teeth are present. Misaligned teeth can also occur and cause lots of problems, but can usually be corrected with braces or extractions. (Yes, dogs can get braces!) We want to keep your buddy’s teeth healthy, so we will be watching his developing teeth closely. The healthcare chart included in this care guide lists the specific

## Neurologic Problems

Several neurologic diseases can afflict Smooth Fox Terriers. Symptoms of neurological problems can include seizures, imbalance, tremors, weakness, or excessive sleeping. If you notice any of these symptoms, please seek immediate veterinary care.

## Megaesophagus

The esophagus carries food from the mouth to the stomach through downward contractions. If the esophagus isn’t contracting properly, food may remain in the esophagus, stretching it to “mega” size. If your SFT is affected, he may throw up tube-shaped portions of undigested food. Special feeding postures, dietary modifications, and medications may be needed to manage this problem. Unfortunately, dogs with megaesophagus commonly inhale bits of food while eating and can develop severe pneumonia. If you notice any unusual eating behaviors or vomiting after eating, be sure to let us know. A quick, painless x-ray can help us determine if your pet has this condition.

## Bleeding Disorders

There are several types of inherited bleeding disorders that occur in dogs. They range in severity from very mild to very severe. Many times a pet seems normal until a serious injury occurs or surgery is performed, and then severe bleeding can result. Von Willebrand’s disease is a blood clotting disorder frequently found in Smooth Fox Terriers. We’ll conduct diagnostic testing for blood clotting times or a specific DNA blood test for Von Willebrand’s disease and other similar disorders to check for this problem before we perform surgery.

## Cancer

[Cancer](#) is a leading cause of death in older dogs. Your Foxie will likely live longer than many other breeds and therefore is more prone to get cancer in his golden years. Many cancers are curable by surgical removal, and some types are treatable with chemotherapy. Early detection is critical! We’ll perform periodic diagnostic tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet.



dental problems your pet may encounter.

### *Deafness*

Heritable deafness has been noted in some Foxie 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.

## **Taking Care of Your Smooth Fox Terrier 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 SFTs. 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 Foxie 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 has low grooming needs. Brush her coat as needed, at least weekly.
- ✓ Smooth Fox Terriers often have serious problems with their teeth, so you'll need to brush them at least three times 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 and body active, or she'll get bored. That's when the naughty stuff starts.
- ✓ She excels at dog sports like agility and Earthdog.
- ✓ She has a high prey drive, so she needs to be leash walked and a tall sturdy fence is a must.
- ✓ 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 Smooth Fox Terrier 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
- ✓ 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
- ✓ General reluctance to run or play
- ✓ Coughing, especially at night or upon rising after sleeping; rapid breathing at rest
- ✓ Tubular vomit, undigested food
- ✓ Any abnormal shaking, trembling, or excessive involuntary tremors





## 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 Smooth Fox Terrier'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 SFT 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:

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# Puppy to Adolescent Health Care Recommendations

How We' ll Keep Your Smooth Fox Terrier		Puppy to Adolescent: Infant to 17 in People Years			Smooth Fox Terrier-Specific Problems We're Looking For	
(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide				
○	6–9 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check Internal organ health evaluation Neurological assessment Blood disorder evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care			Dental alignment, heart murmur, hernia Cataracts Brachygnathism, Oligodontia, and Prognathism Pulmonic stenosis Megacosophagus Deafness von Willebrand's disease (vWD)	
○	10–13 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check 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 Cataracts Brachygnathism, Oligodontia, and Prognathism Pulmonic stenosis Deafness von Willebrand's disease (vWD)	
○	14–16 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss obedience and grooming			Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Brachygnathism, Oligodontia, and Prognathism Pulmonic stenosis von Willebrand's disease (vWD)	
○	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check Bone and joint exam Blood disorder evaluation Pre-surgical diagnostics Discuss microchipping			Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Brachygnathism, Oligodontia, and Prognathism Pulmonic stenosis Legg-Calve-Perthes disease von Willebrand's disease (vWD)	
○	6 months through 1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Heart health check Skin and coat exam Bone and joint exam  Neurological assessment Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss lifetime genetic considerations			Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Brachygnathism, Oligodontia, and Prognathism Pulmonic stenosis Allergies and Malassezia dermatitis Legg-Calve-Perthes disease, Hip dysplasia, Elbow dysplasia, and Patellar luxation Epilepsy von Willebrand's disease (vWD)  All major diseases important in the breed with diagnostic plan	



## Adult to Golden Years Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Smooth Fox Terrier		(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Smooth Fox Terrier-Specific Problems We're Looking For
	Adult-Mature: 18 to 39 in People Years	○	1 years through 9 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Bone and joint exam Neurological assessment Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss behavior and nutrition  Schedule spay/neuter after 1 year	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts, Glaucoma, and Primary lens luxation Mitral valve disease Allergies and Malassezia dermatitis Urolithiasis Hip dysplasia, Elbow dysplasia, and Patellar luxation Epilepsy and Wobbler disease von Willebrand's disease (vWD)
	Senior: 40 to 59 in People Years	○	10 years through 12 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Bone and joint exam Neurological assessment Cancer screen Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts, Glaucoma, and Primary lens luxation Mitral valve disease Allergies and Malassezia dermatitis Urolithiasis Hip dysplasia, Elbow dysplasia, and Patellar luxation Epilepsy and Wobbler disease Mast cell tumor
	Golden Years: 60+ in People Years	○	13+ years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Bone and joint exam Neurological assessment Cancer screen Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts, Glaucoma, and Primary lens luxation Mitral valve disease Allergies and Malassezia dermatitis Urolithiasis Hip dysplasia, Elbow dysplasia, and Patellar luxation Epilepsy and Wobbler disease Mast cell tumor

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.