



# *The Scottish Deerhound*

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AN OVERVIEW OF ITS CARE AND REQUIREMENTS

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ANDRÉS STENBERG

## Getting to Know Your Scottish Deerhound

Deerhound owner Sir Walter Scott called Scottish Deerhounds “the most perfect creatures of heaven,” and, indeed, the Deerhound is a very special breed. While sighthounds (the group of dogs to which Deerhounds belong) have the reputation of being aloof and not very affectionate, nothing could be further from the truth in the case of Deerhounds: They crave as much human companionship as they can get! Deerhounds were not only bred to be the extraordinary hunters that they are, they also graced the fireside of the highland clansmen and thus have become extremely sensitive companions to man. As a result, the depth of your relationship with your Deerhound is limited only by how much love and time you put into it.

Most Deerhound owners soon find their dogs accompanying them everywhere they go. Deerhounds are generally terrific travelers and love to ride in cars (except during hot weather). Around the house, they love to curl up on the couch with you while you read or watch TV. They especially love to get up and stand in front of the TV, obstructing your view, during the climax of a show. In short, they want to be everywhere their owners are as much as possible. They make terrible kennel dogs and will be miserable if regularly left outside alone all day in a dog pen. Understanding this most important component of the breed’s nature and incorporating your dog into your life as much as possible is the best thing you can do for your Deerhound.



BIRGIT AIGNER



RICHARD HAWKINS

## Exercise

One of the best ways to spend time with your Deerhound is to exercise it. Indeed, it is crucial to the health and well-being of your dog and really needs to be done every day. Don't let the Deerhound's easygoing, couch-potato attitude around the house fool you; it needs exercise, a lot of it, daily. Your exercise regime should include both trotting and running (for your dog, that is) and ideally should be done for at least thirty minutes twice a day. In many urban and suburban communities, because of leash laws and a dearth of open space, providing enough running exercise for your Deerhound can be a challenge, although fenced ball fields, beaches, and dog parks are available in many cities.

An adult Deerhound, **built up gradually**, can keep up with almost any exercise program. Therefore, adult Deerhounds are perfect for those who walk, jog, bicycle, cross-country ski, or have other dogs around that like to play. You will find that



CYNTHIA CRYSDALE-SHIRLEY

your Deerhound is not interested in entertaining itself; it needs you or another dog to exercise with it. This is the reason that many people have more than one Deerhound, so they can play with each other in a securely fenced area and thus reduce to once a day the need for exercise with you.

If you are a homeowner, securely fencing your yard, ideally with a six-foot fence, is highly recommended. Electronic fences are not safe for Deerhounds.

These recommendations are for adult Deerhounds over eighteen months old. While puppies and adolescents should be exercised every day, they should never be subjected to extremely strenuous exercise such as extended running or bicycling.

While three-month-old puppies can and should walk every day, they need to be built up very gradually, and care should be taken not to overdo things. Build up distance slowly and try to exercise your pup off-lead in a safe area, so it can choose the speed of the walk and can stop when it wants to. Be aware of signs your puppy is tiring and don't push it. Don't exceed a couple of miles a day walking with puppies and avoid activities such as jogging, bicycling, mountain climbing, and walkathons until your Deerhound is over eighteen months old. In other words, no forced exercise for the young dog!

As sweet and gentle as Deerhounds are, it is important to note that Deerhounds often have a different playing style from other breeds, and there are many dogs of all sizes that cannot handle playing with a Deerhound (although there are also many that have no problems). You should always supervise your Deerhound when it is playing with other dogs and stop play if there are any dogs that don't appear to be enjoying themselves. Also, Deerhounds – especially young Deerhounds – can inadvertently hurt very small dogs.

Like all of us, Deerhounds can get arthritis and other aches and pains as they get older, and this can be expressed through lameness, pain when you touch them, or reluctance to eat, do stairs, jump, or exercise. If any of these symptoms occurs, please consult your veterinarian for diagnosis and treatment. You and your vet



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STEVE SURFMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

might decide to reduce the intensity of your dog's exercise routine, although in many cases regular moderate exercise is beneficial.

Another thing to be aware of is hot weather. Deerhounds have a hard time keeping cool during hot spells, so it's important to reduce the duration and intensity of your walks and exercise only during the cooler, less humid parts of the day in the summer or if you live in a hot climate.

Finally, the Deerhound has been preserved as a functional coursing hound. Therefore, be forewarned that, while your Deerhound will usually trot quietly by your side, it will be attracted to chase anything that moves: a squirrel, a rabbit, your neighbor's cat or little dog, and especially deer. While Deerhounds don't normally run off without returning (they generally turn around as soon as they've caught or lost their quarry), when in pursuit, they often run without any awareness of what's going on around them, particularly if you haven't conditioned them to come when they are called. Avoid roads when exercising off-leash (and remember that Deerhounds can run a mile in about two minutes), teach your dog to recognize animals it shouldn't chase, and work on conditioning your dog to come when it is called no matter what it is doing. You should begin this training from the time your Deerhound is a little puppy, and training should continue for your dog's entire life, **as you can only safely exercise your dog off-leash if it comes when called 100% of the time.** While you can minimize coursing problems to a great extent with proper socializing and vigilant recall training, you can't call your dog back if you are not with it. Please do not let your Deerhound out unless it is in your securely fenced yard or under your immediate supervision!



STAN FISHER PHOTO

## Deerhounds Around the House

Watching a Deerhound at full speed is one of the most beautiful sights in the dog world. However, you would never know your Deerhound was capable of expending so much energy from watching it around the house. The Deerhound's quiet, sensitive temperament has always been valued by those who have lived with them. George Cupples said it best in 1894:

*"How perfectly docile is the thoroughbred deerhound of our own Scottish forests and stalking ranges! .... His inveterate keenness, no less than his strength renders him as bad a foe as mortal creature need wish to face. Yet how gentle and familiar a housemate is he; of all dumb favorites the most decorous by the hearth and table; a marvel of patience with little dogs; and among the children a plaything that can be handled as they will."*  
*(Scotch Deerhounds and their Masters)*



AMY OPOKA

Deerhounds are one of the easiest breeds to live with. They are quiet and never underfoot. They are sensitive and have naturally good manners (with the exception of a little food stealing – it's hard to resist those goodies when your nose and mouth are exactly kitchen-counter height!) and generally don't require harsh corrections or formal obedience training. In fact, Deerhounds are so quiet and easygoing they make terrible watchdogs: Most will **watch** what is going on when someone arrives at your door, but often an adult Deerhound will not even bother to get up when someone comes to visit. While not necessarily one-man dogs, some Deerhounds can be somewhat reserved around strangers. As with most dogs, Deerhounds accustomed to non-abusive children are very patient with them. They are very people-oriented and lie around wherever you are, only moving when you do. They are, however, mindful of their creature comforts: If you don't provide them with a comfortable place to sleep, i.e., a four- to five-foot-long dog bed with about four inches of padding, they will pick one of their own, usually your bed or sofa. If you want your Deerhounds to stay off your furniture, you must provide them with dog beds wherever you want them to be.



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## Training

A typical Deerhound should be completely reliable with people, all other dogs, and other household pets. Most Deerhound breeders work very hard to retain this wonderful temperament, but in dogs, as in people, there is some variation in personality. So, while the ideal Deerhound is sensitive, sensible, and doesn't need any socialization or training at all, there are some puppies that do, and all puppies can benefit from getting out in the world. Therefore, it is recommended that you take your puppy for

**short** trips to different places a couple of times a week so it can meet other dogs, people, and other animals; experience new things; and learn about how it needs to behave no matter where it is. Puppy kindergarten is highly recommended. Please remember to consult with your veterinarian before taking your puppy out in public to make sure your puppy is safely immunized.

However, formal obedience classes are often not necessary for adult Deerhounds. Since they are so attuned to people and naturally well mannered, classes are not needed. However, such classes can be fun for both you and your dog – just keep in mind that your Deerhound considers you equal partners, expects you to say please and thank you, and does not subscribe to the Golden Retriever work ethic. Choose

a class that emphasizes positive, inductive (bribery) methods and remember the two cardinal rules of training a Deerhound:

- 1) Use a lot of food and play.
- 2) If your Deerhound does an exercise correctly once, the best reward you can give it is not to ask it to do the exercise again during that training session; Deerhounds hate drilling (except for the down-stay, which is their favorite exercise).



ANNE ALIE

If you keep these points in mind, you will be surprised at how much fun you can have training your Deerhound.

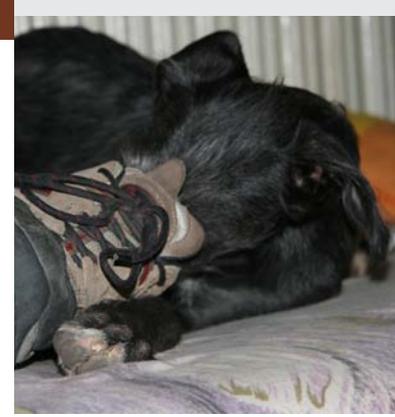
As your Deerhound puppy grows into an adolescent, you will probably wonder if we are talking about the same breed as the monster living under your roof! Keep in mind that the Deerhound puppy can be a different animal from the adult – and a very obnoxious one! You will doubtless realize that, while your Deerhound puppy is the sweetest thing going, it is also:

### Destructive:

Yes. Most Deerhound puppies are shredders and nesters. They like to shred paper, cloth, and shoes. Children's toys are a favorite. They like to drag clothing around your house, eventually making a big pile of it that they lie on and sometimes start to shred. They usually do this right next to the beautiful dog bed you've thoughtfully provided (if it hasn't been shredded). There's no guarantee that your furniture and cabinets are safe. Most Deerhound puppies like plants and will start an indoor/outdoor landscaping service that takes pruning to a new level.

### Active:

That, too. While your puppy's body is gaining ten pounds a month, all that food being ingested is not going to the brain! Although your Deerhound puppy soon becomes a very large dog, mentally it is still a baby and acts accordingly. By the time your Deerhound makes it to eighteen months, you will see glimpses of the laid-back dog you wanted when you first decided to get a Deerhound. But what should you do in the meantime?



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ANNE ALIE



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The best way to cope with your Deerhound puppy is to exercise it. Destructive tendencies can be remarkably severe in puppies that aren't getting enough exercise. Find a playmate for your puppy, take it to doggy day care, teach it to chase a Frisbee or a ball (if you can; retrieving is not a high priority for many Deerhounds), go to puppy kindergarten (recommended!) and don't forget to walk it. You'll soon know your puppy's active hours and when it wants

to sleep. A Deerhound puppy that has outlets for its energy is much easier to live with than one that isn't getting enough exercise, so you're doing both of you a huge favor.

As you will notice that your puppy plays a lot, you will also notice that your puppy sleeps a lot. Sleeping is as important to your puppy's health and well-being as playing, and over-tired puppies can also exhibit behavior problems, so it is important



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that you balance your socialization and exercise programs with your puppy's need to sleep for several hours each day. The best way to do this is to watch your puppy and try to follow its lead about when it wants to be active and when it needs to sleep. Most Deerhound puppies don't need

daily socialization outings: a couple of short trips a week will usually suffice. If you bring your puppy to doggy day care, be sure to tell the day-care providers about your puppy's need for nap time. (Actually, nap time is a lifelong activity for most Deerhounds, as you will notice.)

And remember, this too shall pass!



AMY OPOKA

## Grooming & Feeding

Probably one reason you were attracted to Deerhounds was because they don't shed very much. However, they do need regular coat care, even more so because they don't shed. You have to remove the dead hair by brushing the coat thoroughly (but gently) with a slicker brush several times a week to maintain healthy skin and coat and to prevent doggy odor.

In addition, Deerhounds, like all dogs, need to have their nails trimmed, their teeth cleaned regularly, and a bath every couple of months. You should also check their ears and keep your eye out (really your hands on – the best way to find things is to feel for them) for lumps, bumps, cuts, etc. While puppies don't need much grooming, you should start doing their nails as soon as possible, brush their coats regularly with a soft brush so they get used to being groomed, and get them used to being bathed.

Sometimes a single Deerhound puppy can be a picky eater. You mix up the most delicious dog food, and your puppy will look at you as if to say, "You want me to eat that?!" and walk away. Don't worry; your puppy will not starve itself. Sometimes it helps to leave a bowl of dry food out all day so your puppy can nibble between meals. Talk to your veterinarian and your breeder about what kind of food to feed and the best feeding schedule.



KERRI JAMIESON

## Health

The worst part of owning a Deerhound is that you will never have it long enough. Because they are giant sighthounds, Deerhounds can have the health problems of both giant breeds and sighthounds. Unlike many smaller breeds, with giant breeds there is no guarantee that your dog is going to make it to a ripe old age, although a number of Deerhounds do.

It is important for you to educate yourself so you can use preventive care and recognize the symptoms if a problem does occur, thus greatly increasing your dog's chances of survival and recovery. Talk to your dog's breeder to find out which health problems have cropped up with your dog's relatives. Get advice about things you can do to minimize the chances problems will occur. For many diseases in dogs, the type of heredity is not known. In fact, for some problems it is not known if they even are hereditary. Responsible breeders make every effort to eliminate health problems from their breeding programs, and it is essential that you contact your dog's breeder if your Deerhound develops health problems at any point during its life.

Below is a list of health concerns for you to go over with your veterinarian. Please take the time to review it together. Learn what measures you can take to prevent these problems and what symptoms to watch for so you can get medical help for your dog as soon as possible should one occur. Please pay particular attention to prevention and symptoms for bloat/torsion. This occurs regularly in large dogs in general, including Deerhounds, and is a life-or-death emergency.

Remember, it is crucial that you exercise your Deerhound daily and groom it regularly so your dog's baseline health is optimum and you can note anything unusual in its early stages. Feed a healthy diet and work with your veterinarian to devise a veterinary care program for your dog. And don't forget to make your Deerhound a much-loved and active part of your family; in dogs, as in people, mental attitude is important!



KERRI JAMIESON



SUE PHILLIPS

Please talk to your dog's breeder and your veterinarian about these health problems, as well as any others particular to your dog's bloodlines and your geographic area, and ask them to keep you current on the latest research, preventive recommendations, and treatment options.

Fortunately for Deerhounds, research into the cause and treatment for many of these problems is ongoing. Talk with your breeder or visit the Health and Genetics page of the Scottish Deerhound Club of America web site ([www.deerhound.org](http://www.deerhound.org)) for a list of studies the club is supporting and what you can do to help these projects.

### **Bloat/Gastric Torsion**

***When either bloat or gastric torsion occurs, your Deerhound needs immediate veterinary care or it will die.*** As with many deep-chested breeds, Deerhounds can be susceptible to bloat, a condition in which the stomach swells because of a buildup of gas and/or fluid, and gastric torsion, in which the stomach actually rotates, cutting off its blood supply. Sometimes the spleen rotates. The symptoms are the same and bloat often precedes torsion. Some of the symptoms might include restlessness, getting up and down, pacing, vomiting (sometimes the vomit is very foamy), attempting to vomit, or the stomach swells and/or gets hard. *Please go over these and other symptoms with your veterinarian so you are familiar with them.*

It is not known what causes bloat/gastric torsion, but there are several practices concerning feeding and exercise that many breeders and veterinarians recommend that might help to reduce the risk that this will occur. Discuss preventive practices with your dog's veterinarian and breeder. As bloat/gastric torsion often happens in the wee hours or on weekends, know whom to call in an emergency. This problem can't wait until morning!



JEANNE KOWALEWSKI

### Cystinuria

Cystinuria is a condition where a very specific type of bladder stone – cystine stones – are formed. These stones can cause blockage, which is a life-threatening emergency that needs immediate veterinary care. Cystinuria occurs in dozens of dog breeds (and

people, too, incidentally); in Deerhounds, it appears overwhelmingly in male dogs. While there is a screening test available for this condition, unfortunately, it is not completely reliable, so currently, it is recommended that you observe your dog a couple of times a day, every day, to make sure that he is peeing normally. Any sign of an infection should be checked out promptly, and *if there is any change in behavior or other sign that your dog is blocked or having trouble urinating, call your veterinarian immediately, as this is an emergency situation that cannot wait.* There is research being done on cystinuria in Deerhounds; to participate in the research, go to the Health and Genetics page of the SDCA web site. The researchers particularly need samples from dogs that have blocked.

***Bloat/Torsion and urinary tract blockage are both life-or-death emergencies that need immediate veterinary care no matter what time of day or night it is.***

Make sure you know whom to call during nights, holidays, and weekends so you won't waste any time if one of these conditions should occur during those times. Make sure you always have enough gas in the car to get you to your veterinarian or emergency veterinary clinic. If you are ever concerned that your dog might be exhibiting symptoms of either of these conditions, call your veterinarian immediately.

### Anesthesia

Deerhounds are closely related to Greyhounds, Afghan Hounds, Whippets, etc., and they can have the same problems regarding anesthesia. Please use a veterinarian who has experience anesthetizing sighthounds, advise them that your dog can have these problems, and remind them that it is easy to overdose a Deerhound. Because of Deerhounds' easy-going natures, your veterinarian can use a local anesthetic more often than might be expected.

### Cardiomyopathy and other heart problems

Cardiomyopathy is a condition in which the heart muscle weakens gradually for reasons that are not yet understood. Unfortunately, there is no cure. As with any new puppy, your Deerhound's heart should be checked

by your veterinarian as soon as you get it. After that, set up an examination schedule so your dog's heart is checked regularly. The exams should get more frequent as your dog ages. Be sure to consult with your veterinarian should your dog have exercise intolerance or develop a cough; heart disease can sometimes be managed for a significant length of time, but only if it's diagnosed early.

### Factor VII deficiency and other bleeding issues

Deerhounds sometimes have bleeding problems, which typically are discovered when a female starts to bleed after spay surgery, although it can happen during any surgery. It was discovered that Deerhounds can have a deficiency in Factor VII, which is one of several clotting factors. Factor VII deficiency can sometimes cause bleeding problems in affected dogs. There is a DNA test for Factor VII deficiency in the breed, and many breeders test their stock and can tell their puppy buyers about Factor VII status. However, several Deerhounds – including some Factor VII-normal Deerhounds – have had severe and sometimes fatal bleeding episodes after surgery. Bleeding problems are rare, but should your dog need surgery, or should you elect to have surgery on your dog, you should discuss this potential problem with your veterinarian ahead of time, so precautions can be taken. There is research being done on bleeding disorders in Deerhounds; for the latest information, including surgery protocols, and to provide samples for research, go to the Health and Genetics page of the SDCA web site.



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ANNE ALIE

## Hypothyroidism

While this problem is rare in Deerhounds, please make your veterinarian aware that there is evidence to suggest “normal” thyroid levels may be lower in some breeds (Deerhounds among them) than others, so diagnosis should be made based on a TSH test should your dog exhibit symptoms.



ANNE ALIE

## Neck issues

Some Deerhounds can develop mild-to-severe neck pain that isn't apparently related to injury. Causes can range from the dog habitually sleeping with its head hanging off furniture or thick dog beds to structural problems in a neck vertebra to Cervical Vertebral Facet Joint Arthrosis to Steroid-Responsive Meningitis-Arteritis (SRMA). Consult with your vet should your dog have a problem.



AMY OPOKA

## Medications

Deerhounds, like other sighthounds, sometimes have fatal reactions to various drugs, including certain dewormers, antibiotics (particularly sulfa drugs), and some pesticides. A good rule of thumb is if it shouldn't be used on a Greyhound, then don't give it to your Deerhound.



ANNE ALIE

## Osteosarcoma

As with many breeds, this form of bone cancer is seen in Deerhounds of all ages, although it is more common in older dogs. Be alert for lumps, bumps, and lameness, and don't delay to have them checked. There are some treatments available for this lethal disease that may help some dogs for a significant amount of time; please consult with your veterinarian or a veterinary oncologist about current treatment options. In addition, research in osteosarcoma in Deerhounds is ongoing, and samples from affected dogs are especially needed. Please talk with your breeder or visit the Health and Genetics page of the Scottish Deerhound Club of America web site for more information.

## Portosystemic (Liver) Shunt

This condition, which is caused when a blood vessel in the liver that is supposed to close soon after birth stays open, is sometimes found in Deerhound puppies. Many breeders test their litters before the pups go to their new homes. Surgery is possible in some cases to correct the problem.



SUE PHILLIPS

## Other disorders:

While not common, the following conditions have occasionally been seen in Deerhounds. Ask your veterinarian about:

Addison's Disease • Allergies • Chronic/recurrent pneumonia • Hemangiosarcoma  
Idiopathic Epilepsy • Malignant Hyperthermia • Panosteitis and OCD



HANA VOBORNIKOVA

## If You Need Help

We hope this brochure has been helpful to you and that you have many years of enjoyment with your Deerhound. It is important to remember that you are never alone when you own a Deerhound. If you have a question or problem with your

dog, there are many people you can call. Your first calls should be made to your veterinarian (where applicable) and the breeder of your dog. If you cannot call the breeder, then please feel free to contact these Scottish Deerhound Club of America Rescue & Placement volunteers listed below. They'd be delighted to assist you.

- |            |               |              |                       |
|------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| West:      | Ellen Pilling | 775-246-0157 | deerhound@gbis.com    |
| Southwest: | Joan Garth    | 505-350-0224 | joangarth@att.net     |
| Midwest:   | Georgina Nagy | 440-647-2749 | clivgeor@aol.com      |
| South:     | Ann Bowers    | 352-335-8602 | wbowers@gator.net     |
| East:      | Fran Smith    | 585-335-3439 | dhumohr@earthlink.net |

## For More Information

If you'd like to learn more about Scottish Deerhounds and the Scottish Deerhound Club of America, go to [www.deerhound.org](http://www.deerhound.org).

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# *The Scottish Deerhound*

AN OVERVIEW OF ITS CARE AND REQUIREMENTS

By Miranda Levin

*This brochure provides an overview of what it is like  
to share your life with a Scottish Deerhound.*

*However, this brochure is not complete, and you are  
encouraged to contact the breeder of your dog, your veterinarian,  
and other Scottish Deerhound breeders and owners in your area  
to determine what is best for your particular dog and circumstances.*

*Please take the time to talk with as many people as you can.*

*Thank you for taking the time  
to learn about the breed.*



Scottish Deerhound Club of America

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