

## Gastric carcinoma study to look at genetic predisposition in Belgians



At 11 years of age, Dani is past the prime age for gastric cancer. She will contribute to the study.

**Photo credit:** Tom Eldredge

Compared to other breeds, [Belgian Sheepdogs](http://www.akc.org/breeds/belgian_sheepdog/) are 16 times more likely to develop gastric carcinoma. [Belgian Tervurens](http://www.akc.org/breeds/belgian_tervuren/) weigh in at 12 times more likely. While [Malinois](http://www.akc.org/breeds/belgian_malinois/) and [Laekenois](http://www.akc.org/breeds/belgian_laekenois/) do not appear on the radar for this genetic predisposition at this time, it is likely they will due to the genetic relations between the Belgian breeds.

### [Gastric carcinoma](http://www.vetsurgerycentral.com/oncology_gastric_carcinoma.htm)

[http://www.vetsurgerycentral.com/oncology\\_gastric\\_carcinoma.htm](http://www.vetsurgerycentral.com/oncology_gastric_carcinoma.htm)

often shows up with a loss of appetite, decreased energy (and of course our Belgians tend to be high energy dogs!) plus vomiting and/or diarrhea. Many dogs show weight loss and they may pass dark, tarry stools. Often signs are not obvious until dogs have an advanced stage of the cancer.

An ultrasound may show early signs of the developing problem but not always. Ulcers and other stomach problems may mimic this, so the definitive diagnosis is by a surgical or endoscopic biopsy. So far, gastric carcinoma is invariably fatal.

Stomach cancer tends to show up in middle aged dogs - often 8 years old or older. This means the dogs may have already been bred. Finding the genetic mutation leading to the predisposition to this cancer could help breeders in their breeding decisions so the problem could be avoided.

There is currently a study underway between the [Michigan State University Center for Comparative Oncology](http://cvm.msu.edu/research/research-centers/center-for-comparative-oncology/comparative-oncology-research-studies/stomach-cancer-study-in-dogs), headed by Elizabeth McNiel DVM PhD DACVIM DACVR, and the [Cancer Genetics Branch of the National Human Genome Research Institute](http://www.genome.gov/10000012) to look for a genetic marker to identify dogs at risk for this cancer.

Dr. McNiel, who is an assistant professor of oncology (cancer) at Michigan State, started off looking at gastric cancers in [Chow Chows](http://www.akc.org/breeds/chow_chow/). She is now adding Belgian Sheepdogs, Tervurens and Malinois. What she needs for her study are blood samples and pedigrees.

Ideal samples are from dogs with gastric cancer or dogs of the selected breeds but at least 8 years old and healthy. Eventually they hope to have samples from 20 to 50 unrelated dogs who have the cancer and from 20 to 50 healthy and unrelated dogs from the same breeds.

Dr. McNiel can be reached for information about sample submissions at [mcniel@msu.edu](mailto:mcniel@msu.edu) (<mailto:mcniel@msu.edu>) or 517-432-3282. Support for this study is through the [Canine Health Foundation](http://www.akcchf.org/) (<http://www.akcchf.org/>) – Grant #1093. Donations can be made via the website at [www.CanineHealthFoundation.org](http://www.CanineHealthFoundation.org) (<http://www.caninehealthfoundation.org/>) or call the toll free number at 888-682-9696. Also, check with your parent club. [ABTC](http://www.abtc.org/) (<http://www.abtc.org/>) (American Belgian Tervuren Club) is sponsoring a [survey for Belgian Tervurens](http://www.abtc.org/index.php/component/content/article/99-health-education-topics-surveys/369-2010-stomach-cancer-gastric-adenocarcinoma-study) (<http://www.abtc.org/index.php/component/content/article/99-health-education-topics-surveys/369-2010-stomach-cancer-gastric-adenocarcinoma-study>) at <http://www.abtc.org/index.php/component/content/article/99-health-education-topics-surveys/369-2010-stomach-cancer-gastric-adenocarcinoma-study> (<http://www.abtc.org/index.php/component/content/article/99-health-education-topics-surveys/369-2010-stomach-cancer-gastric-adenocarcinoma-study>). [Click here](http://www.abtc.org/images/stories/health_ed/gastric%20adenocarcinoma%20study/Gastric_Survey.pdf) ([http://www.abtc.org/images/stories/health\\_ed/gastric%20adenocarcinoma%20study/Gastric\\_Survey.pdf](http://www.abtc.org/images/stories/health_ed/gastric%20adenocarcinoma%20study/Gastric_Survey.pdf)) to go directly to the survey - the survey is for all Tervuren owners, including the owners of healthy dogs. The [BSCA](http://www.bsca.info/) (<http://www.bsca.info/>) (Belgian Sheepdog Club of America) also has information on their website at <http://www.bsca.info/health.html> (<http://www.bsca.info/Belgian%20Sheepdog%20Flyer.pdf>) (<http://www.bsca.info/Belgian%20Sheepdog%20Flyer.pdf>)



**Debra Eldredge**, Belgian Breeds Examiner

Deb M. Eldredge, DVM has been a member of the Belgian fan club for over 25 years. Currently living with three Tervurens, she is also familiar with Malinois, Laekenois and Sheepdogs. Deb participates in virtually all dog sports with her dogs. Health, performance, training and results of...

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