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| **Doberman Health Issues**  **http://www.hope4dobe.org/images/animation/linedobe.gif**  Dobermans, like all other breeds, have certain health issues that may effect them during their lives. Some of these maladies are diseases which have proven to be (or are suspected to be) genetic in nature. Health testing performed on breeding stock can help in lowering the risk that puppies will have some of these diseases. Of course, there are seldom any guarantees but careful and thorough testing can be helpful in acquiring a healthy, happy pet whose chances for a long and painfree life are maximized.  Below is a list of some of the diseases and disorders which can occur in Doberman Pinschers. Items shown in red can be identified through testing. Screening tests are not currently available for the other conditions listed, but work is being performed in veterinary colleges across the country (often funded by the Doberman Pinscher Foundation of America) to learn more about these conditions and hopefully, someday, screening tests will be available for other diseases. It is important to know the status of breeding stock - clinically affected dogs and/or dogs exhibiting symptoms for any of these conditions should NOT be bred.  The text below is intended as an aid to those seeking health information and should not be used to form a diagnosis replacing regular veterinary care. For more detailed information regarding these diseases and disorders, use your Internet search engine or discuss them with your veterinarian.  **DILATED CARDIOMYOPATHY (DCM)** - is suspected to be an inherited disease in Dobermans and is an ultimately fatal heart disease. Research is in progress in several institutions. An echocardiogram and/or ultrasound of the heart will confirm the disease but will NOT guarantee that the disease will not develop in the future.  **HIP DYSPLASIA** - is inherited. It may vary from slightly poor conformation to gross malformation of the hip joint allowing complete luxation of the femoral head. This can require expensive surgery to replace the hip joints and is extremely debilitating. Both parents' hips should be OFA (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals) certified - excellent, good or fair rating. Fortunately, hip dysplasia in Dobermans has been on the decline in recent years, thanks to the diligent efforts of reputable breeders to avoid breeding animals with poor OFA ratings.  **HYPOTHYROIDISM** - is probably inherited and means that the thyroid gland is not producing enough hormone to adequately maintain the dog's metabolism. Weight gain, poor coat and irritability are common symptoms of the disease. It is easily treated with inexpensive thyroid replacement medication given on a daily basis. Thyroid testing (T3, T4, TSH and autoantibodies) should be performed on an annual schedule. Finding autoantibodies to thyroglobulin (T4 autoantibodies) is an indication that the dog has "Hashimoto's Disease". Low thyroid dogs, manifested by a high TSH and a low T4, should be treated and monitored on a regular basis.  **VON WILLEBRAND'S DISEASE (vWD)** - is an autosomally (not sex-linked) inherited bleeding disorder with a prolonged bleeding time (somewhat similar to hemophilia in humans) and a mild to severe factor IX deficiency. A DNA test for vWD is now available - genetically: clear, carrier (inherited one disease gene), affected (inherited two disease genes). Carrier-to-carrier breedings, in theory, will produce puppies that are 25% clear, 50% carriers, and 25% affected. Ideally, only clear-to-clear or clear-to-carrier should occur, so that no puppies will be affected. Not all dogs that are vWD affected will have severe bleeding problems, but they can be at risk whenever they need to have surgery or have an accident.  **CERVICAL VERTEBRAL INSTABILITY (CVI or Wobbler's Syndrome)** - is suspected to be an inherited condition in Dobermans. Dogs (usually in mid-life) suffer from spinal cord compression caused by cervical vertebral instability or from a malformed spinal canal. Extreme symptoms are paralysis of the limbs (front, hind, or all four). Neck pain with extension and flexion may or may not be present. Surgical therapy is hotly debated and extremely expensive with questionable success. In some surgically treated cases, clinical recurrence has been identified.  **PROGRESSIVE RETINAL ATROPHY (PRA)** - is an inherited condition in Dobermans. Clinically, visual acuity is diminished, first at dusk, later in daylight. The disease progresses over months and years, to complete blindness. A screening test is available and can be performed by a veterinary ophthalmologist. CERF (Canine Eye Registration Foundation) will certify eyes for 12 months from the date of evaluation.  **ALBINISM** - "white coated" or "white factored" Dobermans should NOT be bred. These dogs are \*tyrosinase positive albinos\*. In 1996, the AKC established a tracking system (the letter "Z" will be part of the registration number) allowing breeders to identify the normal-colored Dobermans which may carry the albinistic gene. A list of all dogs tracing back to Shebah's (the first Albino Doberman registered) parents is available from the Doberman Pinscher Club of America (DPCA). All breeders should require an AKC certified pedigree with colors and registration numbers to check that "white coated" and "white factored" dogs are not present in the pedigrees of the dogs to be bred.  **GASTRIC DILATATION-VOLVULUS (GDV or Bloat)** - swelling of the stomach from gas, fluid, or both causing the stomach to twist on its axis. Bloat is an emergency, life-threatening situation and requires IMMEDIATE medical attention. Death can ensue quickly. Bloat is most often seen in deep-chested dogs, like the Doberman. Although the exact cause is not known, it commonly occurs in dogs who eat large quantities of dry food, exercise vigorously after eating, and/or drink large amounts of water after eating. Some possible ways to reduce the risk of bloat include: wet dry food with warm water allow it to expand and soften before feeding; reduce exercise by crating or keeping the dog calm for one hour before and after each meal; lessen the quantities of food given at a single time (i.e. instead of one large meal, feed two smaller meals per day).  **CHRONIC ACTIVE HEPATITIS (Copper toxicosis)** - this is a biological defect in a Doberman's ability to remove copper from the body. This disease effects the liver and can be fatal.  **COLOR DILUTION ALOPECIA (CDA)** - is a hereditary disease most often seen in blue- or fawn-coated Dobermans. These Dobes are born with a healthy hair coat but, usually beginning in adolescence to early adulthood, the coat may become thin, brittle, patchy and dry, resulting in permanent partial coat loss.  CDA is not so much a health issue as it is an issue of esthetics. |

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