

# HEALTH CONCERNS

---

TIBETANMASTIFFS.AU | tibetanmastiffau@gmail.com

Tibetan Mastiffs are a robust and hardy breed, developed in the harsh climates of Tibet and the Himalayas. However, like all breeds, they are prone to certain health issues. Understanding these potential health concerns is crucial for owners to provide the best care and maintain the overall well-being of their Tibetan Mastiff. Below is a detailed overview of the common health concerns associated with Tibetan Mastiffs:



## 1. Hip Dysplasia

- **Overview:** Hip dysplasia is a genetic condition where the hip joint does not develop properly, leading to instability and, eventually, arthritis. This is a common issue in large and giant breed dogs, including Tibetan Mastiffs.
- **Symptoms:** Signs may include difficulty standing up, reluctance to climb stairs or jump, decreased activity or range of motion, and limping or lameness in the hind legs. As the condition progresses, the dog may experience pain and reduced mobility.
- **Prevention and Management:** Responsible breeders screen for hip dysplasia through X-rays and only breed dogs with healthy hips. Maintaining a healthy weight, providing moderate exercise (avoiding high-impact activities), and possibly using joint supplements like glucosamine and chondroitin can help manage symptoms. In severe cases, surgical intervention may be required.

## 2. Elbow Dysplasia

- **Overview:** Elbow dysplasia, another common joint condition, involves abnormal development of the elbow joint, leading to pain, lameness, and arthritis. Like hip dysplasia, it is more prevalent in large breeds.
- **Symptoms:** Signs of elbow dysplasia include forelimb lameness, difficulty standing, a noticeable decrease in activity, and a reluctance to play or exercise.
- **Prevention and Management:** Screening breeding dogs for elbow dysplasia is essential. Treatment options include weight management, anti-inflammatory medications, physical therapy, and, in some cases, surgery.

---

TIBETAN MASTIFF AU NZ

TIBETANMASTIFF.AU | tibetanmastiffau@gmail.com

### 3. Hypothyroidism

- **Overview:** Hypothyroidism is a condition where the thyroid gland does not produce enough thyroid hormone, leading to a slow metabolism. It is one of the more common endocrine disorders seen in Tibetan Mastiffs.
- **Symptoms:** Common symptoms include weight gain without an increase in appetite, lethargy, thinning coat, dry skin, recurring skin infections, cold intolerance, and behavioral changes.
- **Diagnosis and Treatment:** A blood test can diagnose hypothyroidism. It is typically managed with daily medication (thyroid hormone replacement therapy) and regular blood tests to monitor hormone levels.

### 4. Canine Inherited Demyelinative Neuropathy (CIDN)

- **Overview:** CIDN is a rare neurological condition seen in some Tibetan Mastiffs. It affects the peripheral nerves, leading to muscle weakness and atrophy.
- **Symptoms:** Signs of CIDN include progressive weakness in the hind limbs, difficulty walking, muscle atrophy, and, in severe cases, paralysis.
- **Management:** There is currently no cure for CIDN, and management is primarily supportive. Genetic testing for this condition is recommended for breeders to reduce the risk of passing it on.

### 5. Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA)

- **Overview:** PRA is a group of genetic diseases that cause the gradual degeneration of the retina, eventually leading to blindness.
- **Symptoms:** The condition usually starts with night blindness and progresses to complete vision loss over time. Dogs typically adapt well to the loss of sight if their environment is consistent.
- **Prevention and Management:** There is no cure for PRA, but breeders can test for the genes responsible for the condition to avoid breeding affected dogs. Owners can manage PRA by ensuring a safe environment and providing consistent routines to help affected dogs navigate their surroundings.

### 6. Entropion

- **Overview:** Entropion is a condition where the eyelid rolls inward, causing the eyelashes to rub against the cornea, which can lead to irritation, pain, and damage to the eye.
- **Symptoms:** Symptoms include excessive tearing, squinting, redness, and pawing at the eyes. If left untreated, it can lead to corneal ulcers or infections.
- **Treatment:** Mild cases can sometimes be managed with lubricating eye drops, but surgery is often required to correct the eyelid's position and prevent further damage.

### 7. Canine Bloat (Gastric Dilatation-Volvulus, GDV)

- **Overview:** GDV, commonly known as bloat, is a life-threatening condition that affects deep-chested breeds like the Tibetan Mastiff. The stomach fills with gas and twists on itself, cutting off blood flow and trapping gas and food inside.

- **Symptoms:** Symptoms include a swollen or distended abdomen, restlessness, drooling, attempts to vomit without producing anything, rapid breathing, and signs of pain. Bloat is a medical emergency that requires immediate veterinary attention.
- **Prevention and Management:** To reduce the risk of bloat, feed multiple smaller meals throughout the day instead of one large meal, avoid vigorous exercise right after eating, and use slow-feeder bowls to reduce the risk of gulping air while eating. Some owners opt for a prophylactic gastropexy surgery to prevent the stomach from twisting.

## 8. Autoimmune Diseases

- **Overview:** Tibetan Mastiffs can be prone to certain autoimmune conditions where the immune system attacks the body's own cells. These can manifest in various forms, such as autoimmune thyroiditis, pemphigus (affecting the skin), or lupus.
- **Symptoms:** Symptoms vary depending on the specific autoimmune condition but can include skin lesions, chronic infections, fatigue, weight loss, and joint pain.
- **Diagnosis and Treatment:** Autoimmune diseases are often managed with medications like corticosteroids and immunosuppressants, as well as lifestyle and diet modifications.

## 9. Osteochondritis Dissecans (OCD)

- **Overview:** OCD is an orthopedic condition where the cartilage in a joint does not develop properly, leading to inflammation and pain. It is common in large breeds during their rapid growth phases.
- **Symptoms:** Symptoms may include lameness, joint swelling, pain on palpation, and reluctance to exercise or play.
- **Prevention and Management:** Preventive measures include providing a balanced diet, avoiding overfeeding, and preventing excessive jumping or running in young dogs. Treatment options include weight management, physical therapy, anti-inflammatory medications, and in severe cases, surgery.

## 10. Cancer

- **Overview:** Tibetan Mastiffs, like many breeds, are susceptible to certain types of cancer, such as lymphoma, mast cell tumors, and osteosarcoma (bone cancer).
- **Symptoms:** Signs of cancer can vary widely depending on the type and location but may include lumps or swellings, unexplained weight loss, lethargy, difficulty breathing, or abnormal bleeding.
- **Treatment:** Treatment options vary based on the type and stage of cancer and may include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, or palliative care.

## General Health and Maintenance Tips for Tibetan Mastiffs

- **Regular Veterinary Check-Ups:** Regular check-ups with a veterinarian can help catch health issues early and manage them effectively.

- **Balanced Diet:** Providing a balanced diet tailored to the breed's size, age, and activity level is crucial for maintaining overall health. Avoid overfeeding, as obesity can exacerbate joint issues like hip and elbow dysplasia.
- **Exercise:** Tibetan Mastiffs require moderate exercise to stay fit and healthy. While they are not highly energetic dogs, they benefit from daily walks and play sessions to prevent obesity and maintain muscle tone.
- **Joint Supplements:** For breeds prone to joint issues, consider supplements containing glucosamine, chondroitin, and omega-3 fatty acids, which can support joint health and reduce inflammation.
- **Routine Grooming and Skin Care:** Regular grooming helps in spotting skin issues, infections, or parasites early. Tibetan Mastiffs have a dense double coat that requires regular brushing to prevent matting and to keep their skin healthy.
- **Environmental Management:** Ensure a safe living environment to prevent accidents and manage conditions like PRA or CIDN. For dogs with vision problems, avoid rearranging furniture or introducing unexpected obstacles.

By understanding these potential health concerns and taking preventive measures, Tibetan Mastiff owners can help their dogs lead healthy, fulfilling lives. Regular veterinary care, a balanced diet, proper exercise, and attention to any signs of discomfort or illness are key to managing the breed's unique health needs.