

Kai Ken Health info for Pet Owners and their Vets

The Kai Ken is one of the native Japanese spitz type breeds, like the Akita and Shiba Inu, that you may be more familiar with. The Kai Ken Society of America has produced this short health pdf to help owners and veterinarians to screen Kai dogs for conditions we have found in the breed, and to make caring for Kai dogs stronger for all. Kai owners should remember that their breeder is an important resource and will want to know how the dog is doing throughout life.



KAI KEN
SOCIETY OF
AMERICA
kaisociety.org

Young Kai

Growing Kai should be checked for loose **patellas** and to check the tracking of the achilles tendon. Sometimes we have seen Kai in their first year show looseness in these tendons and generally they outgrow this. We have seen a few require surgery to correct, so it is the Club's advice to monitor these joints.



It is not uncommon for male Kai to have **retained testicles**, so male pups should be checked to make sure both are present and dropped. We recommend that all pups be allowed to complete most of their growth before neutering, but if retained testicles are a problem they may need to be dealt with sooner.

Heart murmurs have been detected in a few Kai, and an auscultation by stethoscope by your vet will be able to detect if any are present and require follow up with a cardiologist.

Considered a 'primitive breed,' the Kai Ken can seem wary and aloof and are generally careful of their well-being. The little ones are curious and impressionable, so making vet visits a happy and relaxed experience for young Kai will help load up on repetitions of good things happening in this setting, and limit any anxiety. Supportive, patient handling and letting the dogs see the stethoscopes etc. can go a long way toward establishing a good rapport between this sensitive breed (similar to many herding breeds or sighthounds) and their veterinarian and staff.

Adult Kai

Through DNA testing and reporting, we have found that Kai carry a couple of genes for **Progressive Retinal Atrophy**. Not all who are genetically affected are clinically affected, however, so we are not yet sure how this expresses in our breed and are tracking it closely. The Kai Society recommends regular eye screening during annual checkups for all Kai and any abnormal results followed up with an ophthalmologist and reported back to breeders. Other conditions seen more rarely in the breed include pancreatitis and idiopathic epilepsy.

Senior Kai

During routine senior blood panels, the Japanese breeds may show alarmingly elevated potassium levels. This is just the result of cells leaking potassium in vitro and not of any disease, due to a condition called Pacific Rim Syndrome, or **pseudohyperkalemia**. An accurate result can be achieved by not allowing the blood to clot (and leak potassium as the cells sit) and separate it quickly after drawing. Treating a normal, healthy dog for high-electrolyte diseases such as Addison's based on an inaccurate lab result can be deadly.

Kai Ken can live into their mid to even late teens with good care, safe dog keeping and the blessing of good genetics and good fortune. Kai do get a bit frosty around the front of the muzzle early, but they are generally a rugged and healthy breed.