

## What is CHIC?

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The Manchester Terrier became a CHIC (Canine Health Information Center) breed recently, but its benefits are still unknown to many breeders and Manchester owners. What exactly is the CHIC, and what do the letters CHIC after a Manchester Terrier's name mean?

CHIC is a centralized canine health database jointly sponsored by the AKC Canine Health Foundation (AKC/CHF) and the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA). Its mission is to provide a source of health information for owners, breeders, and scientists that will assist in breeding healthy dogs. The health tests are tailored for each breed, with the goal of providing breeders a reliable source of information regarding dogs they may use in their breeding programs. For puppy buyers, the CHIC program provides accurate information about the results of a breeder's health testing. Although there are no guarantees, the probability that a dog will develop inherited disease is reduced when animals in its pedigree have tested normal.

CHIC is an open database, provided that the owner of the dog has opted to release the results into the public domain. The CHIC number itself does not imply normal test results, only that all the required breed specific tests were performed and the results made publicly available. The database is updated as new results are reported (i.e. yearly CERF results), or as new screening tests become available. Dogs that already have a CHIC number are not required to have new screening tests done to maintain their number, as the database is based on the dog completing the requirements at a given point in time.

So how does this information apply to the Manchester Terrier breed? There are **three required tests** and **two optional tests** for a MT to be included in the database. The first required test is for von Willebrand's Disease, a bleeding disorder that most breeders are familiar with. The test must be performed by the VetGen laboratory via a simple cheek swab, or the dog must be Clear By Parentage (first generation only - see the OFA website at [www.offa.org](http://www.offa.org) for the detailed policy) in order to be recognized. The second test is for Autoimmune Thyroiditis, commonly known as Hypothyroidism, via OFA evaluation from an approved laboratory. Labs such as Idexx or Antech are commonly used by veterinarians to run bloodwork, thus the thyroid evaluation can be done by the dog's regular vet. The third test is an eye examination by a board-certified Veterinary Ophthalmologist, with the results registered with either CERF (Canine Eye Registry Foundation) or OFA. The results of the eye exam are valid for one year only, thus annual re-certification is recommended. Dogs can be examined by an Ophthalmologist at a specialty veterinary clinic, or at eye clinics that are commonly held in conjunction with dog shows.

The two optional tests include evaluation for Legg-Calves-Perthes disease, also known as Femoral Head Necrosis, and Congenital Cardiac disease. Legg-Calves-Perthes is a heritable disease nicknamed "the small dog's hip dysplasia," and it usually diagnosed between four months and one year of age. While the dog is growing, blood flow to the head of the femur (the "ball" in the ball-and-socket hip joint) is interrupted, causing death of bone cells. When blood flow is restored, the head of the femur remodels, causing an irregular fit in the joint's socket, resulting in pain, stiffness, and an irregular gait. Legg-Calves-

Perthes can be easily screened for or diagnosed by a simple hip x-ray done by your regular veterinarian. The second optional test is screening by a Veterinary Cardiologist for heart abnormalities. The screening may be performed either by auscultation (listening with a stethoscope) for murmurs (abnormal heart sounds), or by echocardiographic examination (heart ultrasound) to locate abnormal blood flow caused by either defective valves or blood vessels. The echocardiographic examination is more extensive, and should be performed on dogs who have an abnormal auscultation, or on dogs showing signs of heart disease (pale or blue gums, exercise intolerance, fainting spells, etc.). Dogs can be examined by a Cardiologist at a specialty veterinary clinic, or at heart clinics held in conjunction with dog shows. Additionally, all dogs meeting the requirements for the CHIC program must be permanently identified by either microchip or tattoo.

As of the writing of this article, only fourteen Manchester Terriers (Toy and Standard) have taken advantage of the CHIC program. Why aren't more breeders working to include their dogs in this database? The tests are relatively simple and widely available, and the results do not have to be "normal" for dogs to be included. Transparency about health problems is the only way to better our breed.