Researchers at the University of Wisconsin College of Veterinary Medicine are attempting to develop a reliable method to detect hip dysplasia in puppies as young as 8 weeks. The researchers are using an ultrasound method to diagnose hip dysplasia. One of the big advantages with this technique is that it can evaluate non-bone portions of the joint such as cartilage. The current methods: interpretation of hip radiographs (x-rays) by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA), and the Penn-Hip method of interpreting the radiographs obtained through the use of a special technique are not considered accurate for dogs less than 2 years or 6-12 months, respectively.

The new technique is showing promise, but further study needs to be done before it can be used for puppies as young as 8 weeks.

Comments from our Veterinary Staff:

Early detection of hip dysplasia would be an extremely valuable tool. Owners would know prior to purchase whether the puppy they are buying is affected by the disease. There are few things sadder than telling the owner of a 6-month old puppy that it has hip dysplasia. Breeders would know early on which puppies are affected and thus which sires and dams should not be bred again. In addition, early detection would allow for early treatment.