

Article provides detailed look at participants in Golden Retriever Lifetime Study

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Blaze, shown here in Durango, Colo., is the last enrolled dog in the Golden Retriever Lifetime Study. Credit: Dr. Sharon Albright, Morris Animal Foundation

What do 3,044 golden retrievers across the nation have in common? They are the principal players in the second published scientific paper from Morris Animal Foundation's groundbreaking Golden Retriever Lifetime Study, highlighting characteristics of the dogs in this landmark study, including age, medical condition, preventive care and more.

Published in the November issue of *Canine Genetics and Epidemiology*, "Population Characteristics of Golden Retriever Lifetime Study Enrollees" focuses on the demographics of the study's participants and their initial visits after enrollment. The study itself is the most extensive prospective study ever undertaken in veterinary medicine, gathering information on the enrolled golden retrievers throughout their lives to identify the nutritional, environmental, lifestyle and genetic risk factors for cancer and other diseases in dogs. It's the first Morris Animal Foundation-funded study conceived, designed and run by the Foundation and its scientific team.

"This is a really strong start and an important compilation of data for this great study and lays excellent groundwork for future publications," said Dr. Missy Simpson, Morris Animal Foundation epidemiologist and lead author on the paper. "We can tell by these initial findings that we have a healthy group of golden retrievers that are cared for by owners committed to their dogs' health."

More than 3,000 golden retrievers from the contiguous United States are enrolled in the study, which launched in 2012 and reached full enrollment in 2015. California has the largest number enrolled (214 dogs), while Colorado has the largest enrolled per capita (197 dogs). Owners and veterinarians complete yearly online questionnaires about the health status and lifestyle of the dogs. Biological samples also are collected, and each dog has a physical study examination annually.

The study found that the median age of dogs at enrollment was 14

months, and approximately half had undergone spay or neuter surgery. Medical conditions reported at enrollment consisted of skin, digestive and urinary dysfunction and were all minor. Owing to the dedication of their owners, a large majority of the [dogs](#) had records of having received [preventive care](#), such as vaccines, parasiticides and flea and heartworm prevention.

"This is another exciting step forward for this unique and pioneering study," said John Reddington, DVM, PhD, President and CEO of Morris Animal Foundation. "This study will shed light on risk factors for cancer, diabetes and other diseases our animal companions face, and has the very real potential to guide and advance veterinary research for decades to come. That means healthier lives for [animals](#), and maybe even for the people who love them."

More information: Melissa Simpson et al, Population characteristics of golden retriever lifetime study enrollees, *Canine Genetics and Epidemiology* (2017). [DOI: 10.1186/s40575-017-0053-5](https://doi.org/10.1186/s40575-017-0053-5)

Provided by Morris Animal Foundation

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