

A Hearing Test

Article by Bob Franklin, CT

We thought it would be interesting to test Jack Russell Terrier owners and breeders to see if they could determine whether a terrier has a deafness problem just from its appearance. We ask that each of you look at the photos of these 10 Jack Russells and decide which ones have normal hearing, which ones have unilateral hearing (determine which ear, too, if you can) and which ones are bilaterally deaf. The key is below the photos but please don't look until you decide to try for yourself. Correct terminology to use is: N for normal hearing; UDL for deaf in left ear; UDR for deaf in right ear; and D for totally deaf.



Dog #1



Dog #2



Dog #3



Dog #4



Dog #5



Dog #6



Dog #7



Dog #8



Dog #9



Dog #10

Snowflake, almost 8 years old in these photos and shown as Dog #4 above, was over 3 years old when she whelped her only litter of puppies. The father of these puppies was Kermit shown as Dog #3 and his hearing is normal. That litter of 4 puppies had 2 deaf, one uni and one normal puppy and was the litter that brought up the issue of deafness in Jack Russell Terriers in 1994. Snowflake (who was discovered to be UDL at the time) was and still is wonderful in obedience, has done well nationally in USDAA agility and was Trailing and Locating winner at the JRTCA National Trial. We had no idea she was a "uni" until she was BAER tested after having that problem litter.

Peewee (UDR) shown as Dog #10 gave no indication that he was a "uni" until we tested him at 3 years of age along with all of the other dogs that came to one of our JRT fun days a month or so after we discovered that Snowflake was UDL. Mickey shown as Dog #9, is Peewee's son by

a BAER Normal bitch and has Normal hearing, but Mickey has produced "uni" puppies. Unfortunately, Mickey's litter was whelped about a month before we knew Peewee was UDR. In Duffy, shown as Dog #8 and bred from two normal hearing parents, we thought we had a wonderful puppy until we tested his litter at 8 weeks of age and he turned out to be totally deaf. The rest of Duffy's litter tested BAER normal. Wendy, shown as Dog #7, has normal hearing, but she had a single littermate with a brown, half face mask on the right side which was UDR.

Popular opinion seems to be that white dogs are most apt to be deaf. However, keep in mind that the Jack Russell Terrier is essentially a white breed anyway. But, as you can see from the photos, Jack Russells with considerable color can also be deaf. The only accurate way to determine if the dog is deaf is to have it Baer tested. Before you purchase a puppy, ask the breeder if both parents were BAER tested and if the entire litter was BAER tested and what the results were. Breeders must BAER test all breeding stock and all puppies from all litters to know for certain the hearing status of each individual and get in understanding of whether or not their lines are producing deafness.

Key: (1) D, (2) N, (3) N, (4) UDL, (5) D, (6) UDR, (7) N, (8) D, (9) N, (10) UDR