

TinyBear Pomeranians

Pomeranian Alopecia X Survey

English: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PCOC-Alopecia-X>

Russian: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PCOC_Survey_Russian

Spanish: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PCOC-Alopecia-X-Spanish>



Alopecia X (sometimes called black skin disease: “BSD”) is a ‘hair loss’ condition which has been known to affect several of the Nordic breeds, and is a prominent, apparently genetic coat defect in the Pomeranian (<http://www.tinybearpoms.com/Reprint-Alopecia%20X%20-%20Dr%20Eckford.pdf>). There are a variety of theories as to cause, progression and associated health defects related to Alopecia X and much confusion surrounds this condition in the breeding community. However, there is little solid scientific evidence to support or disprove many of the theories that are being argued by those in the breed. No matter which of the many “sides” and “groups” you belong to, it is difficult to argue the seriousness of this coat issue, for which we really have a very poor understanding. Donations to the genome mapping and/or Alopecia X research projects will aid significantly in our understanding of the condition and will hopefully lead to a genetic test to identify carriers and dogs that will become affected in the future. All PCOC members, Pomeranian breeders and pet owners have a vested interest in supporting the research to aid our breed and are encouraged to make a donation to support research into Alopecia X, including the genome mapping project: <http://www.americanpomeranianclub.org/health/donate.htm>. Solid support of the research will be a clear indication of our collective commitment to combating this coat defect in the Pomeranian. The list of donors, including several PCOC members, can be seen here: <http://www.americanpomeranianclub.org/health/donors.htm>.

The goal of the research is to gain an understanding of the genetic defect that causes Alopecia X and a test to identify carrier and affected dogs early so that appropriate breeding decisions can be made to avoid producing bald dogs. This goal should be attainable in time with a great amount of commitment on the part of both the Pomeranian and scientific communities. There have been many successes in developing genetic tests for canine diseases, as well as diseases in other species. However, in the mean time we cannot simply sit by and wait for a test. There have been many observations and theories on how we can identify suspect dogs without a test. But despite the many theories, there really have been no properly controlled studies to look at coat characteristics or other factors and relate them to later Alopecia X status. Additionally, there have been a lot of statements that Alopecia X dogs suffer severe health issues, yet conversely the veterinary community as a whole has reported that Alopecic Poms do not suffer health defects more than their coated counterparts.

In order to shed some light on these and other issues, the PCOC has taken a leading roll and developed an extensive **Pomeranian Alopecia X Survey**. This survey launched near the beginning of 2013. Some breeders previously entered data in the OFFA Pomeranian Health Survey, which was a general health survey. At last check, that survey suggested that the incidence of Alopecia in Poms is around 16%, with more young males than females developing coat loss, but in older Poms the rates appear to equalize. Currently this is the only satisfactory data available on the incidence of the condition and therefore it was a very useful survey. Unfortunately it doesn't ask a sufficient number of detailed questions about Alopecia X specifically, and the database doesn't allow some of the very useful analyses that we would like to do in order to learn more about this coat loss problem. This new survey is a more comprehensive effort focused on this one issue, and will provide a greater range of options to analyze the resultant data.

Anyone who owns or has owned in the past a **purebred Pomeranian** is asked to complete the survey, and do so separately for EACH dog that they own, have owned or produced. Pets and show dogs are equally valid for entry into the survey, as both groups suffer Alopecia X. Unaffected dogs are just as important as affected dogs if we are to get accurate statistics on the incidence of this coat issue. Some owners entering data in the survey may not know or remember every detail for every dog as some have owned or produced dogs over years or even decades. Most questions include "unsure", "don't know" or "don't remember" as options. It is best to use this option rather than guessing if you are not sure. It is also clear that the sheer number of dogs that some in the community have produced or owned over their time as breeders would make the survey a very large time commitment. Thus breeders are encouraged to try to take a representative cross-section of the dogs over their time as a breeder or Pom owner, both coat-loss dogs and coated dogs, so that as accurate as possible data can be derived from the survey. And then as owners have spare time here and there, enter additional dogs until they have completed the survey for each dog owned and/or produced.

The survey can be filled out **anonymously** if that is desired, but there are optional fields where you can choose to include your name as well as the name of the dog you are entering in case of the need to contact you for clarification or if you want to contact the survey administrator to update the information that you have previously entered. You can place your name and e-mail address in the name field. The data is being collected in a database where the individual records will **never** be made public. Once sufficient responses have been collected to give significant

conclusions, the aggregate data will be released to the community in a manner that will not identify any respondent or any specific dog.

Great effort has been made to produce a survey that is fair and unbiased in any way, not favouring any particular view, including the ability to complete the survey anonymously if participants are concerned about their data being associated with them. The goal of the survey is to find out the **facts** about Alopecia X, no matter what they ultimately tell us, and the results will be analyzed in a scientific, unbiased fashion. There are some controls that have been implemented to avoid large numbers of fraudulent entries in the case that someone attempts to skew the results in favour of any one particular opinion, however it is hoped that this won't be needed.

This survey is a PCOC initiative and it is the hope that ALL members will support the survey by filling it out separately for EACH dog they currently own or have previously owned or have produced. While we have had close to **1000 responses** to the survey thus far, we hope for double that number before we will have a complete dataset and can begin to relate many of the attributes queried in the survey to a Pom's Alopecia X status. The survey is truly a global effort, as can be seen in the countries of origin of the participants of the survey (as of the beginning of June, 2013). While approximately 22% of respondents have reported their country as Canada, clearly the majority of respondents are from the United States and other countries. Thousands of Pomeranians have been registered with the CKC, including around 700 additional dogs each year. Therefore far more Canadian Poms are eligible to be entered in this survey than the worldwide total that have been registered since the survey opened.

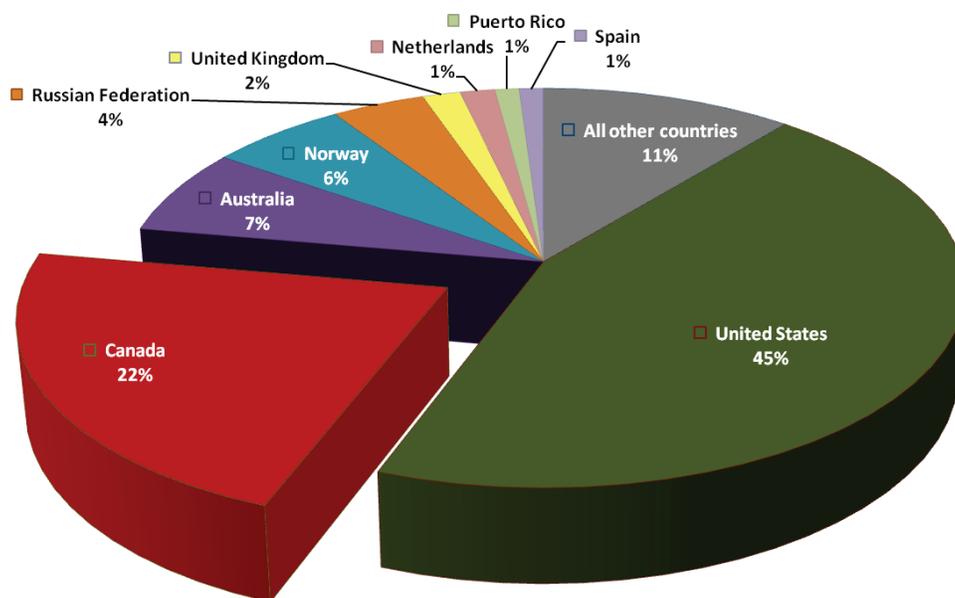


Figure 1. Alopecia X survey respondent country of origin.

We hope that you will take the time to complete the survey for all of your dogs (both coated and coat-loss Pomeranians) and encourage others, both breeders and pet owners alike, to do so as well. Let's make Canada the country of origin for the majority of the survey responses and

lead the worldwide Pom community by example! With sufficient responses, this survey has the potential to greatly impact our understanding of this coat problem and lead to validated visual clues to dogs that will suffer coat loss in the future, and also indicate which visual characteristics do not correlate with future coat loss.

The survey can be accessed via the Pomeranian Club of Canada or American Pomeranian Club websites, or directly at the following addresses:

English: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PCOC-Alopecia-X>

Russian: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PCOC Survey Russian](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PCOC_Survey_Russian)

Spanish: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PCOC-Alopecia-X-Spanish>

Participants will need to navigate to this site separately for each dog they wish to enter. Please share this link as widely as possible, including with your pet purchasers.

Thank-you in advance for your commitment to this process. With the support of the PCOC membership we have a real opportunity here to make a significant contribution to our understanding of Alopecia X. Please feel free to contact me (paul@tinybearpoms.com) if you have any concerns or questions about the survey.

Thank-you for your support,

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