

## Breeder's Notebook

### Genetic risk assessment

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He was one of the top studs of his breed. And when he was 5 years old, he went blind with progressive retinal atrophy (PRA). His owners could have kept quiet, but they chose to tell the owners of his offspring – many of whom denied the possibility that their dogs might in turn be carriers. In fact, so many owners didn't want word to get out, that the stud-dog owners took out ads in their breed magazine telling people to avoid breeding to any of their dog's descendants because of the possibility they'd produce PRA. It worked, and a decade later you'd be hard pressed to find the stud in any pedigrees. Unfortunately, there was still plenty of PRA around. And now, two decades later, we realize they probably made the wrong decision.

It was the 1980s, and the stud's owners did what they were told to do: Don't breed affected dogs. And in fact, that strategy works well if the trait in question is dominantly inherited. That's why so few of the genetic problems that plague breeds are dominantly inherited. They're too easy to get rid of, especially if they affect the dog early in life before it's of breeding age.

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