

## Swiss Run Greater Swiss Mountain Dogs

### Von Willebrand Disease

In Von Willebrand's Disease, the dog is missing a substance, which helps the platelets form clots and stabilizes Factor VIII in the clotting process. This substance is called 'Von Willebrand's factor.' Because of the deficient clotting of blood, dogs with Von Willebrand's disease have excessive bleeding upon injury. This would be similar to hemophilia in humans. vWF is a bleeding disorder affecting mostly dogs that can cause hemorrhages in a variety of organs, but especially at surgical sites and mucosal surfaces, i.e. gums.

Excessive bleeding is the main symptom. Bleeding generally occurs after a wound or surgery. In these cases, the blood simply does not clot in the normal time, and bleeding is extensive. Dog's with Von Willebrand's disease may also develop nosebleeds, or bleeding from the gums. Bleeding may also occur in the stomach or intestine in which case the stool may either have blood in it, or be black and tarry. Some dogs will have blood in their urine. Bleeding into the joints also occurs, which can cause symptoms similar to those of arthritis. A transfusion with blood collected from normal dogs is the only proven way to treat Von Willebrand's disease.

There are three classifications for this factor ranging from mild to severe. Most dogs can live with this disease and not have any problems. There are two ways to diagnose vWF. One is by a blood assay; this test uses an ELISA to detect the severity of the disease. The other test is a buccal mucosal bleeding time. This is the most useful test for predicting bleeding problems in dogs suspected of being affected. In this procedure you slice a small incision in the gums and test the bleeding time. This is 100% accurate to determine how much they may bleed during surgery. This is a genetic disease so when purchasing a puppy you want to make sure all the parents tested negative. Also, a dog with this disorder should not be bred. There are not too many precautions that need to be taken. Your dog should lead a normal active life. You just want to stay away from Aspirin and thyroid supplements have been shown to decrease bleeding time and increase the vWF concentration.