

## English Setters

### How Old Is Your English Setter?

#### July 2020

In this year of COVID-19, many of us have been spending more time at home with our dogs than usual. If images on Facebook are anything to go by, English Setter folks have been training with their dogs, working on some groovy new hair-dos (not always appreciated by the dogs), swimming, doing home improvement projects (supervised by their English Setters), and having a few new litters. Some people are even starting to go back to showing their dogs! And, of course, old dogs have been getting older.

Speaking of old dogs, a Golden Retriever in Tennessee named August recently broke the record as the world's oldest Golden when he celebrated his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday <https://www.livescience.com/oldest-golden-retriever.html>. He is already well beyond the typical lifespan for Golden Retrievers which is around 10 to 12 years. He'll presumably be setting his sights on the record of the oldest known dog – an Australian Cattle Dog named Bluey who lived to be 29, dying in 1939.

If you're wondering about English Setter aging, various health surveys <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/16414/english%20setter.pdf> in the UK [https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/749300/english\\_setter.pdf](https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/749300/english_setter.pdf) found the median lifespan of the breed to be between 11 and 12 years though it wasn't unusual for dogs to live between 13 and 15 years. I'm not aware of formal health surveys regarding the breed's lifespan in the U.S. but many of us have had dogs that lived between 12-14 years. I currently have a girl who is still very active at age 13.

Many breeds are involved in longevity studies, especially breeds that are known to have shorter lifespans. But there are researchers looking at the lifespans of dogs in general.

A study was recently published with a new way to calculate the age of dogs in human years <https://www.ajc.com/news/national/new-study-finds-dogs-don-age-multiples/cII8Gq4BRtUuX7IJH8dG8N/>. Most of us have heard that dogs age seven human years for each dog year, which would make my 13-year-old girl 91 in human years! I don't think she would agree.

A new formula, developed by researchers at the University of California San Diego School of Medicine studied 104 Labrador Retrievers, ranging from newborn puppies to dogs 16 years of age. They tracked changes in the DNA of the dogs. They found that dogs age rapidly when they are young but then their aging slows significantly when they become adults.

“A one-year-old dog is similar to a 30-year-old human. A four-year-old dog is similar to a 52-year-old human,” according to their news release. “Then by seven years old, dog aging slows.”

Senior author Trey Ideker, PhD, professor at UC San Diego School of Medicine and Moore's Cancer Center said, “This makes sense when you think about it — after all, a nine-month-old dog can have puppies, so we already knew that the 1:7 ratio wasn't an accurate measure of age.”

The researchers plan to continue their work by looking at ten other breeds since it's known that different breeds age differently due to size and other genetic factors.

There are a number of researchers interested in canine aging at the moment. Along with benefiting dogs, it's also thought that these studies can help with human aging and health. One study that is seeking all kinds of dogs as participants is the Dog Aging Project <https://dogagingproject.org/>. The goal of the project is to understand how genes, lifestyle, and environment influence aging so the information can be used to help pets and people.

The Dog Aging Project study asks you to fill out a survey about your dog's health. Your dog continues to live a normal life at home. Some dogs will be asked to participate in some extra studies that can involve lab tests with veterinary specialists. All participation is voluntary. The study is working through the University of Washington and Texas A & M.

I think we all want our English Setters to live long, healthy lives. If these studies and researchers can help our dogs live longer and stay healthier, good luck to them!

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