



## Copper Toxicosis in Dogs

What Shiba Inu Owners & Breeders Should Know

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Educational handout for owners, breeders, and veterinarians

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## Overview

Copper toxicosis is a genetic and metabolic liver disorder in which copper accumulates in liver cells over time, potentially leading to chronic hepatitis, fibrosis, cirrhosis, and liver failure if unmanaged. While historically associated with breeds such as Labrador Retrievers and Bedlington Terriers, expanded genetic screening now shows emerging relevance in Shiba Inu.

## Genetic Considerations

**ATP7B:** Variants may increase susceptibility to copper accumulation, especially under dietary or metabolic stress. Shiba Inu are not a classical copper breed, but carriers are appearing in large screening datasets.

**GPT Variant:** Dogs with two GPT copies may show normal or low ALT even in the presence of liver disease, masking early warning signs.

## Veterinary Monitoring

ALT alone is insufficient. Recommended monitoring includes AST, ALP, GGT, bilirubin, bile acids, and ammonia when indicated. Liver ultrasound or quantitative biopsy may be appropriate in persistent or unexplained cases.

## Nutrition & Management

Feed diets with controlled copper levels. Avoid organ meats and unregulated supplements. Zinc supplementation should only be done under veterinary supervision. Stable dogs should be monitored every 6–12 months; higher-risk dogs every 3–6 months.

## Breeder Summary – Copper Awareness in Shiba Inu

- Shiba Inu are an emerging, not established, copper-risk breed.
- ATP7B carriers do not automatically develop disease.
- GPT variants can mask ALT elevations and delay diagnosis.
- Diet and monitoring consistency matter more than genetics alone.
- Transparency with puppy buyers is strongly recommended.
- Avoid alarmism; focus on informed risk management.

## Puppy Buyer FAQ – Copper Toxicosis & Shiba Inu

### **Is copper toxicosis common in Shiba Inu?**

No. Shiba Inu are not a breed with widespread copper toxicosis, but some may carry risk variants.

### **Does a genetic variant mean my dog will get sick?**

No. Variants indicate risk, not certainty. Diet and monitoring are key.

### **Why can blood tests look normal?**

Some dogs have a GPT variant that masks ALT elevation despite liver stress.

### **What should I feed my Shiba Inu?**

A balanced commercial diet with controlled copper. Avoid organ meats unless vet-approved.

### **How often should testing be done?**

Every 6–12 months for healthy dogs; more often if risk factors exist.

## Sources & References

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