Russian Tsvetnaya Bolonka News

Volume Q1 2026

Save the date October 9,2026 the Russian Tsvetnaya Bolonka Club will hold our first AKC specialty as a fully recognized AKC toy breed.

The journey began in the year 2000 when I imported my first Russian Tsvetnaya Bolonka from Moscow. The following year, Dr. Patt McRae joined me and we imported three additional Bolonki. We knew we needed a registry to track and make sure our registrations were correct with three generation Russian pedigrees behind the dogs registered in our database. By 2015 we had satisfied all the AKC requirements and were accepted into the AKC FSS. We celebrated by holding our first breed specialty. The specialty event took place in Springfield, Massachusetts show center. From across the country came 19 Bolonka owners, some were Havanese owners who had adopted the Bolonkas as a second breed. Some were new dog owners with no experience in showing a dog, Havanese owner Mark Kolbe with a beautiful little black imported male named Buddy took breed and Jessice White's imported bitch took best of opposite. It was also where we held our first club meeting as the Russian Tsvetnaya Bolonka Club of America.

On October 9, 2026, it will mark 26 years to achieve my dream of full AKC breed recognition.

I hope you can join us for the celebration of our first specialty as a fully recognized AKC breed.

Candace Mogavero

President RTBCA

2026 RTBCA Specialty

The RTBCA Specialty will be held as a concurrent show in West Friendship, MD on October 9, 2026. It will be followed by two days of designated specialties on the 10th and 11th. Mark your calendar and stay tuned for more details!

New Titles

The new year is off to an exciting start, as some Bolonki have earned their Champion and Grand Champion titles as of January 30, 2026. Congratulations to the following pups and owners!

Grand Champion:

Debby's Katya owned by Debra Buse

Showboat Etched In Steele owned by Shannon Rivas, Deborah Howington, Elizabeth Melzer, Kelsey Jesseph

Champion:

Debby's Bolongna has a first name it's Oscar owned by Debra Buse

FSS to Toy Group Transfer — Registration Gotchas!

While many Bolonka owners received their new AKC full registration certificates automatically during January, others have not. Some folks received full registration certificates for some dogs and not others.

If this is the first time you've owned dogs that went from FSS to full recognition, you should be aware that the AKC will send new registrations *automatically*. If you haven't received your full registration in the mail, you should contact the AKC FSS department at FSS@AKC.org. Provide them with the registration numbers or copies of FSS certificates to expedite the process of correcting their records. It typically takes just a couple of days to correct by email. Please ensure you do this as soon as possible. Bolonki without full registration certificates are considered ineligible to compete. If you do not have the full registration certificate (or written confirmation of eligibility) before you show your Bolonka, it is likely that points and titles will not be awarded. Several owners found this out the hard way, after showing their Bolonki throughout the month of January, only to realize AKC considered the dogs ineligible.

If your Bolonka is over 5 years old, AKC's policy is they don't automatically send new registration certificates. You must request them.

If you plan to breed a male over 7 years old, the AKC DNA Parentage Evaluation ($50) is required before you can register any puppies. This requires that AKC has a DNA sample for your dog, which can be provided using the AKC DNA Kit ($55)

The Grooming Table

There are various brands and styles of grooming tools and hair care products. This issue will mention items from several categories, starting with brushes. There's a line from Chris Christensen called the Big-G Slickers. There is a mini version called the Baby G that's the perfect size for a Bolonka. It has extra long, flexible pins that help remove knots and tangles.

Most Bolonka owners will say to never blow dry the dog's coat. Unfortunately, in cold weather a dog is uncomfortable when left wet. There are a number of very adjustable pet dryers, but there are also blow dryers (for people) that only have a diffuser. This type of dryer paired with a blow dryer stand (or clip-on arm) make for a very portable solution to have a gentle flow of warm air on your Bolonka to keep them warm and speed up drying a little.

Product Review

I have several Bolonki, each with somewhat different coats. For the ones clipped down, I've been using iGroom and Artero products. The Artero Hidratante shampoo is great for regular bathing, leaving the hair healthy and silky smooth. For the ones in full coat I've been happy with the results achieved with the Hydra Luxury Care Moisturizing Shampoo, Conditioner, and Dematting and Finishing Spray

If you're interested in sharing your product experience, please send them to RTBCANewsletter@gmail.com. The results will be published in the next newsletter.

The Health & Genetics Committee

Tatiana Semenova has accepted the position of Health & Genetics Committee Chairperson. Tatiana holds a PhD in biology from Moscow State University and a Masters Degree from Pacific College of Oriental Medicine.. She has worked in biotech and even has a couple of patents. She also worked in genetic engineering at the Institute of Molecular Genetics. Tatiana has many years of experience with Black Russian Terriers and is an AKC Breeder of Merit. She started with Bolonki several years ago.

Unraveling the Science of CDDY, CDPA, and IVDD

What is the biggest enemy of knowledge?

It is not ignorance.
It is the conviction that someone knows it all.

Scientific understanding evolves constantly. What we accept as fact today may be refined, corrected, or even disproved tomorrow. Progress requires continuous research, open discussion, and the courage to acknowledge past misunderstandings.
With the recognition of the Russian Tsvetnaya Bolonka (RTB) by the American Kennel Club, this is the right time for us to focus on building a healthy population in the United States. In this article, we will review the genetics behind **chondrodystrophy (CDDY)**, **chondrodysplasia (CDPA)**, and their relationship to **intervertebral disc disease (IVDD)**.

Understanding the Terminology

CDDY (Chondrodystrophy)

CDDY is a genetic condition in dogs caused by an FGF4 retrogene insertion on chromosome 12. It is associated with abnormal intervertebral disc development and moderately shortened limbs.
It is considered **semi-dominant** for limb length (dogs with two copies typically have shorter limbs than those with one copy). Importantly, CDDY is associated with a predisposition to intervertebral disc disease (IVDD).
However, carrying the mutation does not automatically mean a dog will develop clinical IVDD.

IVDD (Intervertebral Disc Disease)

IVDD is a **result**, not a cause.
While genetics can predispose a dog to IVDD, other contributing factors may include:

- Metabolic influences (not necessarily poor nutrition, but complex biological processes)
- Environmental stress (jumping, falling, obesity)

Biomechanics and physical conditioning
Breeds most commonly affected include Dachshunds, Basset Hounds, Bulldogs, and Corgis. Historically, short-legged dogs were intentionally bred for functional purposes — including limiting jumping ability so they would remain close to livestock.

How IVDD Affects Dogs

Imagine your dog's spine as a stack of jelly-filled donuts. These "donuts" — the intervertebral discs — cushion the vertebrae and allow flexible movement.

In dogs predisposed to IVDD, these discs can harden and degenerate prematurely. When that happens, the disc may herniate and compress the spinal cord — which can cause pain, weakness, or neurological deficits.

The Current Situation in RTB

At present, we do not have documented active clinical cases of IVDD in RTBs in the United States, and we aim to keep it that way. To our knowledge, it is not currently considered a breed-specific problem.

It is important to remember that genetic laboratories providing commercial testing are businesses. While they provide valuable tools, they are not research institutions. Interpretation of results requires context, scientific understanding, and careful breeding strategy.

CDDY vs. CDPA

Both CDDY (chromosome 12 FGF4 retrogene) and CDPA (chromosome 18 FGF4 retrogene) can produce short legs in dogs.

However:

- **CDDY (CFA12)** 2 copies can increase risk of IVDD.
- **CDPA (CFA18)** produces the classic short-leg phenotype but is not independently associated with disc disease.

The genetics behind CDPA vary among breeds, and additional mutations may also influence limb and spinal structure. Research is ongoing.

Genetics Is Not Destiny

Possessing one or even two copies of these mutations does not mean a dog is destined for health problems. Many dogs with CDDY or CDPA live completely healthy lives without ever developing IVDD.

Genetics is only one part of a complex picture. Environmental factors such as weight management, muscle tone, conditioning, and lifestyle also play significant roles. Additionally, there are likely other genetic modifiers that have not yet been identified.

Responsible breeding decisions should consider:

- Full health history of ancestors
- Clinical outcomes within lines
- Genetic diversity

Balanced pairing strategies

It is not just about test results — it is about the whole dog.

Breeding Considerations

Avoid excluding all single-copy carriers from breeding programs. Doing so may unnecessarily limit genetic diversity, which is essential for maintaining a healthy and sustainable RTB population. However, breeding carrier to carrier (two CDDY-positive dogs) increases the likelihood of producing offspring with two copies of the mutation, which may increase risk.

Thoughtful pairing, not panic, is the responsible path forward.

A Field Still Unexplored

There is still much we do not know. Your participation, observation, and active involvement — including documentation of case studies within different lineages — will be invaluable resources for the breed's future.

Scientific References

1. Brown et al. (2017) — PNAS
Brown EA, Dickinson PJ, Mansour T, et al.
FGF4 retrogene on CFA12 is responsible for chondrodystrophy and intervertebral disc disease in dogs.
Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA. 2017;114(43):11476–11481.
DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1709082114
Key findings:

- Identified the functional FGF4 retrogene insertion on chromosome 12 (CFA12).
- Established its association with chondrodystrophy and IVDD.

Widely recognized as the primary identification of the CDDY mutation.

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2. Parker et al. (2009) — Science
Parker HG, VonHoldt BM, Quignon P, et al.
An expressed FGF4 retrogene is associated with breed-defining chondrodysplasia in domestic dogs.
Science. 2009;325(5943):995–998.
DOI: 10.1126/science.1173275
Key findings:

- Identified a separate FGF4 retrogene on chromosome 18 (CFA18).
- Responsible for classic short-legged phenotype (CDPA).

Does not independently cause disc degeneration.

Additional Authoritative Sources

Veterinary Genetics Laboratory (UC Davis)

- CDDY testing information

Interpretation of semi-dominant limb phenotype
National Institutes of Health (NIH)
Overview of autosomal recessive and dominant inheritance patterns
MedlinePlus Genetics
General inheritance pattern explanations

Tatiana Semenova
PhD Biology
MSAOM
AKC Breeder of Merit

Newsletter Committee

Please consider helping with the Newsletter. We need a couple of people to write and edit articles for publication. This year will be exciting and it would be great to have people share their experiences in the show ring.

Other Announcements

Send your news to RTBCANewsletter@gmail.com.

Litter Announcements

Gentle Power Kennel in NC has 1 male and 1 female. Contact Tatiana Semenova at (917) 609-8765

Showboat Kennel in Georgia has puppies available. Contact Deborah Howington at (706) 975-1127 or showboatkennels@gmail.com