

Dobermann annual breed health report February 2017

Give a Dog a Genome Project

This is a joint project of the Kennel Club and the Animal Health Trust. Full genomes are being sequenced for a dog from each of 75 breeds. The breed itself had to raise half of the cost and the £1000 for a dobermann to be included was raised by several of the breed clubs. The genome will then be on record for use in connection with any disease that researchers are investigating. We have opted to sequence the genome of a dobe known to have DCM. We are now trying to raise funds for a second dog to be sequenced so that, where DCM is concerned, we will hopefully have the genome for one affected dog and one clear dog. I say hopefully because we can never be totally sure that the unaffected dog would not have developed DCM later, but by choosing a mature dog that has had several clear tests, we will have our best chance of making the comparison. There is no suggestion that the genes responsible for DCM, or any other disease, will be located immediately, but the availability of the genomes for future research will be potentially important. For the second genome, we have to raise the full sum of £2000, so any donations from clubs or individuals are welcomed.

Cardiac Biomarker Project

Follow-up echo and Holter tests are being carried out on selected dogs, primarily those that had high biomarker results. Once this is complete, the data will be analysed at Liverpool University and Principal Investigator Dr Jo Duker-McEwan estimates that the final report will be available around the middle of 2018.

Longevity

I reported last year that my death records gave a median age at death of 8.65 years, which was comparable with the KC survey figure of 8. My median figure now is 8.42. Please send as many death details as possible to sueithorn@yahoo.co.uk as this data needs high numbers of records to be really reliable. I need to know pedigree name, date of birth and death and cause of death where known, as well as an indication of whether this is definite or just assumed.

There is now a longevity register being maintained by Georgie Kuhl and supported by seven of the breed clubs. Dobs can be registered if they live to at least ten years (whether still living or not) and progeny can be registered if both parents lived to at least ten years. The progeny are then issued with a 'Bred for Longevity' certificate. Please support this project by entering details of your eligible dobs at <https://www.dobermannlongevityprogram.co.uk/>. There is currently no fee for participating and details can be submitted via a simple online form.

PHPV

PHPV stands for Persistent Hyperplastic Primary Vitreous and is a congenital (ie from birth) developmental problem of the eye. This leads to deposits on the lens of the eye, which can lead to mild or serious visual problems, even to blindness. Puppies can be tested for PHPV from about 8-12 weeks of age and, if clear at that age, will be clear for life. Of the test results held by the Kennel Club, only 2% were affected.

The Kennel Club's Assured Breeder Scheme (ABS) recommends annual eye testing, but the repeat testing is for general eye health only and most breeders do not do this as it is not based on evidence

about any specific problems, and most of us would prefer to spend this money on annual heart testing. This leads to a confusing situation whereby puppy purchasers might think a breeder is not following best practice by not testing annually.

I have been communicating with the Kennel Club and the British Veterinary Association about this for some time and the issue of generic testing in all breeds has now been brought forward for discussion by the two groups with a view to making the requirements based on evidence about specific issues. I had argued for a single PHPV test, but it looks as though the KC/BVA might opt for a test before breeding, one in middle age and one in old age. This is, in principle, an improvement, but in practice I suspect most breeders will still only carry out the first test, as this testing is a recommendation and not a requirement of the ABS scheme and will still use up money that could better be spent on heart testing. It is probable that the Kennel Club will carry out a consultation before making changes.

Mammary tumours

I've reported previously that dobes are one of the breeds most at risk of mammary tumours. A paper recently published in *Translational Cancer Research* concludes that aspirin inhibits cell proliferation in dogs' mammary gland tumours and thus inhibits tumour growth. This could prove to be an important discovery.

Understanding breed health

We have very little breed-specific data available on the prevalence of most diseases. VetCompass is a project run from the Royal Veterinary College, which uses data captured from many vet practices and analyses this to derive information on specific diseases. VetCompass contains the details of about 1500 dobermanns, which is enough to allow significant analysis. At my request, the dobermann has been added to the list of projects available for participating students and postgrads. So far, most emphasis has been on high-risk breeds, but I am hopeful that this may be picked up on at a later date.

Collaboration

I am pleased to report that most of the breed clubs have agreed to work together in future with regard to health. I am planning to make contact with all the clubs' breed health representatives with a view to working together to get a fuller picture of important health issues, where we stand with the current state of knowledge and what can be done to improve the health of our beautiful breed.

Sue Thorn

Breed Health Co-ordinator

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suejthorn@yahoo.co.uk