

Dear Friends,

Please find following my summary of the meeting we held in Como.

Several people have had comment to make about them and I have made these small changes. Most people have replied accepting them and being happy with them and thank you for all your replies. A few other changes have been requested changes that I have questioned and others have not agreed with these changes. I have replied and asked people to get back to me but in the absence of replies I have therefore decided to make a ruling that these will be the final version of the meeting and Mission Statement as we need to move on. If you still have any issues about any of them then be assured we should take a few steps at the meeting to make sure we do this a little bit better next year.

We can easily alter things in the future and maybe for the next meeting we should do things properly and put “Minutes of Previous Meeting” on the agenda although I would stress I am not calling these minutes.

Can I suggest next year that we have a little bit more structured meeting. I will volunteer to take the minutes if no one else wants to do them but we need to have an agenda and stick to it. If we are going to put a record of the meeting on our web site as a permanent record for everyone to see we need to have a better process for a] conducting the meeting and b] recording it and producing the record.

I have other “organisational” thoughts for our future but for the time being please accept the following as a reasonably accurate summary of the discussions that took place. I think it is inevitable that we will have a few processes to sort out as we evolve over the next few years. We want to keep things as relaxed and informal as we possibly can but an organisation covering as many countries as ours is bound to need some structure and agreed processes to function efficiently.

I also apologise again for the lack of umlauts, accents etc my keyboard is set as a boring English one, no offence intended. (I cannot tell you how hard it was to get the Euro sign in but thought it was worth the effort in view of the subject (and the amount!)).

Thank you.

Best Wishes to everyone.

Steve

Summary of Berner IWG Meeting held Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2006  
Palace Hotel, Como, Italy

Persons identifying themselves as present

Steve Green BMDC of GB (UK)

Antonio Indrizzi SIBB (Italy)

Tarja Ekman SSFS (Finland)

Wolfgang Zorner VSSO (Austria)

Joelle Bardet AFBS (France)

Joel van Haute BKZS (Belgium)

Pat Long Berner-Garde (USA)

Raphael Weinstock VSSO (Austria)

Laura Bernetti (Italy)

Martha Cehrs KBS (Switzerland)

Jan Kranenberg (Netherlands)

Norbert Bachmann SSV (Germany)

Amando Avezedo APBS (Portugal)

Silvana Vogel Tedeschi CIABS (Italy)

Judith Dieter BMDCA (but living in Italy)

Inge Bibby DBSK (Denmark)

Birgitte Damsgaard (Denmark/Sweden)

*Also present for the first part of the meeting were Dr Catherine Andre, Dr Matthew Breen and Dr Tessa Breen and Aurelja Sivec (Slovenia). Tarja Ekman also had to leave early before the end of the meeting.*

In the chair for the meeting was the President of the group Dr Bachmann and (a short way into the meeting) Mr Green agreed to produce a record.

1] Dr Bachmann had circulated a suggested agenda prior to the meeting and the first item on this was data exchange and contracts. However, following email discussion he asked if members would rather discuss the Mission Statement and address the "What is the IWG?" issue first. After a short open discussion the first question openly addressed was "who can be a member" and after discussion it was agreed that we wished to stay an informal group as much as we could. This avoided difficulties over rules that could fairly apply to all countries. Some clubs still expressed a difficulty in having a relationship with non FCI registered or affiliated Kennel Club registered clubs and a discussion took place on how to resolve things. It was agreed that all FCI affiliated clubs as well as those belonging to the official non FCI Kennel Club in their country could be represented. A view was expressed that once we started making rules it would be difficult to stop and they would have to be very complicated rules to cover every member country evenly. This would make it more difficult to function as everyone had a different home situation to contend with.

It was agreed that further new members could be on two levels

Level I] representing a Breed club affiliated to the FCI or an associated body (such as The UK Kennel Club or The American Kennel Club etc).

Level II] an individual with something significant to contribute towards Objective 10 could apply to the President outlining their BMD health credentials and an email circulation and subsequent voting could take place. In the discussion Martha Cehrs stressed the "something significant to contribute or proven record in Bernese health aspect" for individuals wishing to join the group and there was general agreement on this point. It was also said that we do not want the group to get too large.

The resultant understanding was that any new member in future would have to show that he or she had a significant contribution to make. It was mentioned that in future at meetings held after symposiums such as this, persons attending the symposium could maybe sit in as observers only at the IWG meeting without having to become members.

Later in the meeting, after each gave a short introduction address to the meeting the following were agreed as new members

Pat Long Berner-Garde (USA)  
Amando Azevedo APBS (Portugal)  
Judith Dieter BMDCA (but living in Italy)  
Wolfgang Zorner VSSO (Austria)  
Raphael Weinstock VSSO (Austria)  
Aurelja Sivec (Slovenia)

2] Shortly into the meeting Dr Andre asked if she and Dr Breen could make a few points before leaving and she gave a short talk assisted by Drs Breen with informative interjections from Pat Long about blood and tissue samples and procedures for them including the following points:

She stated Berner Garde is an excellent platform for the group to use as it is a very large BMD record with good information and accessible to all.

She needs blood samples for her work.

Michigan State University need tissue samples but these are not really practical from Europe due to the logistics.

Ideally samples should be sent to one point in Europe. Dr Ekherth had offered to do this but Dr Breen said that whilst he appreciated the gesture, the money he had offered to spend on freezers and storage would be better spent on transit costs as freezers were already available where they were needed at the places where the samples were analysed.

Histio samples were required by Dr Andre.

Researcher in the USA is looking for Mast Cell Tumour samples and requires any BMD sample plus pedigree and a note saying who you are and is dog affected with MH.

Dr Andre agreed to send out a protocol but also said it would be the same as the one she gave out last year in Salzburg.

After this discussion Dr Andre and Drs Matthew and Tessa Breen left the meeting.

3] Dr Bachmann then returned to the subject of data sharing and put up a data contract on the screen for discussion. This subject had caused much debate prior to the meeting and the key issue was principally the problems for the SSV and the CIABS in sharing data with other clubs. The solution of having 2 levels of data had emerged and there was much discussion about this. Dr Bachmann talked of modifying the SSV's position to include sharing information with FCI registered clubs even if these were not the principle club in their country.

The situation was confusing because there were many different levels and types of information available in different countries and each country had different club regulations and even national laws to conform to. Some countries have lots of individual data about specific dogs and others are not allowed to compile this. Others may only have summary statistical data but there was agreement that everything anyone can contribute could be useful. In short each member country has a different background to work from. Each country has to take responsibility for its own information.

It was agreed that for some information a data contract between individual clubs would need to be agreed and signed with strict controls recognised on how that data could be used by the receiving club. This was referred to as a "club to club" contract. It was agreed that clubs wishing to enter this type of contract were free to start arranging them but each such contract would need to be modified to suit the individual relationship for the two clubs involved. Essentially each club to club contract would be an individual arrangement.

Clubs who did not want, or were unable to get involved in, this type of agreement could still contribute to and/or use the second level of data which did not require such agreements. Most of this type of data would already be published and in the public domain in its country of origin.

Dr Bachmann stressed that only people and clubs using dogs with official pedigrees issued by FCI or FCI affiliated bodies, (such as the UK Kennel Club, or American Kennel Club), were acceptable members of the IWG. Clubs or individuals who have dogs registered with non official bodies of this level could not be members of the IWG. Exchanging data about dogs could only take place with persons and clubs fitting this criteria.

4] The meeting then discussed the Internet platform circulated previously by Birgitte Damsgaard who gave a short presentation outlining the proposed web site she had constructed. The homepage was discussed and reviewed. (Later) a suggestion was made (by Joel van Haute) that something to make the page obviously identifiable as a Bernese Mountain Dog related site was accepted and it was agreed to call it "Berner IWG". At present this was hosted on Birgitte's web site but it was agreed to set up our own internet domain name. There were several offers to pay for this but as the cost was so small this was deemed not worth using up valuable time discussing it and Birgitte was given a cash donation for the first year's registration. At present the site had a structure but no content and a discussion about this agreed that the site should contain information about the IWG (later it was suggested that the Mission Statement be used for this) and articles relevant to our objective although permissions from the authors may be needed. Another suggestion from Birgitte was links to summaries of each of the international seminars starting in 2000. Most links would be to the different club web sites and addresses within giving health and longevity related information available through that club. The clubs would then be responsible for maintaining the information on their own sites and responsible for any restrictions of their own information. It was also stated that data from dogs should be accepted only if they are coming from breeders/club with FCI or National Kennels official pedigree.

{Note: web site subsequently set up at [www.berner-iwg.org](http://www.berner-iwg.org) }

5] The discussion then moved on to "Strategies in Each Country to reach Objective 10". It was agreed that each country must decide for itself how to proceed towards Objective 10. Again, this will be affected by the structures, rules and current situation each country has to work under. It was agreed everyone must do whatever they can in their own country but also accepted that for some people it would be very difficult.

Martha Cehrs gave out a sheet outlining the current position in Switzerland. This is attached as appendix 2 to this meeting.

Silvana Vogel Tedeschi from the C.I.A.B.S. in Italy then gave out a handout from her club outlining their position and plans for Objective 10. This is attached as appendix 3 to this meeting.

6] It was then suggested (by Pat Long and Judith Dieter) that instead of just emailing each other we could set up a web group on Yahoo. This was readily agreed and Pat Long agreed to undertake this with Dr Bachmann as the owner of the group.

[Note: subsequently the group was set up at <http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/Berner-IWG> ]

7] It was suggested that the next meeting, as part of the symposium day in Burgdorf in August 2007 would be helped by a preliminary meeting the night before (Thursday). This was generally accepted and Martha Cehrs agreed to facilitate this.

8] The Mission Statement was then raised (by Steve Green) and he handed out a sheet with the original version circulated on email and the amendments suggested. This gave rise to further discussion incorporating what we are and how we intend to work. It was agreed to extend the first sentence to comply with the "FCI and affiliated Kennel Club clubs only" sentiments already expressed earlier in the meeting. The reference to having no financial assets was raised and it was left in as the majority agreed it gave good emphasis to our lack of official status and informal nature. If, at some point in the future, we decided to raise money and have a bank account the Mission Statement can easily be altered to accommodate this. After some discussion over several points it was agreed to include the amendments previously suggested by Silvana with a few other minor alterations.

The amended Mission Statement now reads as given at appendix 1]

9] Antonio Indrizzi from the hosting S.I.B.B. club then made an announcement about a financial award being set up in memory of their late President Alberto Vittone. This could be payable to anyone who performs any work to assist Bernese Mountain Dog health. This could be a research student looking for funds or any other project potentially useful to our breed anywhere in the world, there were to be no restrictions on the exact criteria as long as it helped the BMD. The details are still to be finalised but the amount is hoped to be at least €10,000 per year for several years. The S.I.B.B. would publish information via the clubs and wished for someone from the IWG to take part in the process. It was suggested that as President Dr Bachmann was the obvious choice although he was reluctant to take part due to pressure of work he agreed to represent the group in this task. It was hoped to announce the first award in Burgdorf next year.

Mr Green proposed that the meeting recorded a big vote of thanks to the S.I.B.B. for this fantastic gesture and everyone agreed. It was suggested that details of the award could be another link from our web site to make them available to everyone. Also the research or project should also be made available to all via links on the BIWG website.

Dr Bachmann closed the meeting by thanking everyone for the friendly and constructive discussion.

Appendices attached

1] Mission Statement

2] The Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Switzerland  
and Objective 10

3] IWG - Objective 10 - CIABS

4] List of Members to date

## **Berner International Working Group**

### **Mission Statement**

*As agreed in Como 2006*

The Bernese I.W.G. comprises of an informal and flexible group of individuals, some representing breed clubs registered either directly with the F.C.I. or clubs registered with Kennel Clubs which have an affiliation with the F.C.I. and others independent Clubs but who use F.C.I. pedigrees or individual persons who can demonstrate that they can make a significant contribution to our aims to improve the health and longevity of the Bernese Mountain Dog

We have a wish to make the average age at death of the breed at least 10 years, we refer to this as “Objective 10”.

We aim to reach this objective in many ways but including:

- \*Collecting scientific studies / articles about health and breeding healthy BMDs
- \*Encouraging the sharing of Bernese health information from our different countries (statistics etc)
- \*Sharing experiences of projects relevant to the Bernese
- \*Helping to establish international co-operation

We are not a club, association or any other formally structured organisation, we do not have a constitution, officers or committee. We have no bank account or membership fee and have no financial or other disposable assets. We do not have any interest or ambition to register puppies, organise shows, appoint or assess judges, grade dogs, authorise breeding or have influence in any area of dog activity organised by the FCI, national Kennel Clubs or breed clubs. By keeping this non official structure we hope to reduce the problems for breed clubs with rules regarding associating with non FCI or other non-affiliated bodies.

Most of our activity is via the internet and our meetings will be held no more than annually. These meetings will be held in a spirit of co-operation, education, friendliness and mutual aid and anyone who shares our “Objective 10” and can offer useful information to help the Bernese Mountain Dog is welcome.

## Appendix 2

### The Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Switzerland and Objective 10

Apart from the BMDC of Switzerland club members who were present at the international symposium in Salzburg, the members of our club's breeding commission and myself who "invented" the description "Objective 10" there is practically nobody in Switzerland who is presently aware of this goal or objective. The BMDC of Switzerland therefore has still to make its members and breeders aware of this objective. Hence most of the activities which the club undertook so far with regards to longevity are centered around making breeders and Bernese Mountain dog owners aware of the longevity problems in our breed and aware of the fact that without information this problem cannot be solved.

#### Present activities :

1. Breeders can request cause of death and age of death information on particular dogs from the breeding commission to plan their litters.
2. Breeders are requested to deliver cause of death information and age of death information on all their breeding stock to the breeding commission.
3. An agreement was reached with the Swiss Kennel Club (who establishes the pedigrees) that the date of birth and date of death of all ancestors of the respective dog be included on the pedigree. The date of death information will be put into a pedigree based on an official certificate from a veterinarian.
4. In 1999 the BMDC of Switzerland created a health fund. It is the responsibility of the commission which administers this fund to define what health problems the breed suffers from and to create projects to solve such problems, as well as to collect the necessary funds to pay for the necessary research.
5. Participation in International Working Group activities.

#### Future/planned activities:

1. In 2007 the BMDC of Switzerland will organize an international symposium which will have the longevity of Bernese Mountain dogs as the major topic.
2. It is planned to send out a health questionnaire which should provide us with a snapshot of the state of health of the breed in Switzerland and provide the health fund commission with information of which health research projects to initiate.
3. Discussions with the Veterinary University in Bern have started around the possibility of creating a "longevity breed value". It seems however at present, that the club has too little information at hand to create such a breed value in the near future. Discussions will continue in the breeding commission and with veterinary universities to find a scientific method to include longevity as a clear criteria in making breeding decisions.



## **IWG - OBJECTIVE 10 – C.I.A.B.S.** (Como, 8.10.2006)

As many of you already know we can do very little in Italy to force breeders and owners to follow specific rules.

Pedigrees are issued by ENCI and, at present, the breeder (CIABS member or not) must just produce the FCI pedigree of the parents to have his/her litter registered with ENCI/FCI pedigrees.

Since our work depends on internal rules and must take into account the fact that our members collaborate on voluntary basis, here are our future plans to reach Objective 10:

### **1) Collecting data**

#### **❖ Questionnaires - Dead and living BMD**

- End 2006: a questionnaire will be sent to the owners of dogs registered in 1999
- 2007: the same with dogs registered in 2000. The answers will allow us to make a first evaluation about the health of the breed in Italy. We'll also get precious information about life conditions, type of food, skin diseases, place where the dog lives, etc...
- 2008: dogs registered in 2001. These data should confirm the previous ones. After that, we'll see if it is useful to go on sending the questionnaire to the owners of the dogs registered in 2002, 2003 and 2004

#### **❖ Delegazioni Regionali (CABBI), Delegazioni Provinciali**

- the delegations have the task to promote sense of responsibility and to explain to owners the importance of giving data, in particular related to health/death
- as regards health they will be in touch with Clinics and Vets to collect data of their patients (BMD)

### **2) Breeding Committee**

A new Breeding Committee will start in 2007, it will work in particular for health / longevity and include specialists in the medical–scientific field, involved in breeding strategies for long-life, healthy BMD.

One of the first tasks of the Committee will be to revise the request to obtain the “selected breeding” (Riproduzione Selezionata / ENCI)

### **3) Project Longevity**

Barbara Gallicchio DVM started a scientific study 2 years ago collecting data (health and death) in order to find relatively old males and females whose relatives did not die young; the aim is to develop new blood lines from the patriarchs and matriarchs, planning the mating to get long-life families. CIABS is co-operating to the study making BMD death / life information available.

The co-operation with other clubs abroad is also important for this study

([www.asetra.it](http://www.asetra.it))



#### **4) Project Death Causes**

We are having the first contacts to develop a study on national basis about death causes:

- ❖ puppies in the first 12/15 days of life
- ❖ autopsies on adult dogs

#### **5) Health Fund**

It was created in February 2006. It supports initiatives in the interest of BMD health.

#### **3) 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of CIABS Foundation - Symposium**

- ❖ Scientific information about health and longevity
- ❖ Judging BMD

#### Appendix 4

##### 3] List of Members

Following this meeting the members of the Berner IWG are now as follows (Total 21 members)

Dr. Norbert Bachmann (*Group President*)  
aueberner@aol.com  
SVV - Germany

Dr. Silvana Vogel- Tedscheschi  
tedeschi.vogel@libero.it  
CIABS - Italy

Joelle Bardet  
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AFBS - France

Birgitte Damsgaard  
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(*Independent*) now Sweden

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(*Independent*) Netherlands

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SSFS - Finland

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NBSK - Norway

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NBSK - Norway

Ilona Lorenz  
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KBS - Switzerland

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