

Summary of Berner IWG Meeting held Friday 15th September 2017

Parc Equestre Fédéral, Lamotte Beuvron, France

People present:

Gerhard Kunz VSSÖ (Austria)
Lindy Kunz (Austria)
Carla van Assche BKZS (Belgium)
Claire Larkin (Canada)
John Simons BMDCC (Canada)
Martina Kopecká (Czech Rep)
Martina Stepanova (Czech Rep)
Inge Bibby DBSK (Denmark)
Joëlle Bardet AFBS (France)
Christine Malherbe (France)
Birgit Schmid (Germany)
Christian Schmid DCBS (Germany)
Silvana Vogel Tedeschi (Italy)

Aguese Accatino (Italy)
Sergey Morozov (Russia)
Olga Ivkucheva (Russia)
Norbert Strahl (Spain)
Birgitte Damsgaard (Sweden)
Lina Martinsson (Sweden)
Lisa Nilsson (Sweden)
Toril Melangen SShK (Sweden)
Helena Malin Hultgiew (Sweden)
Emelie Gemzell (Sweden)
Steve Green BMDC of GB (UK)
Fara Bushnell BMDCA (USA)
Pat Long (USA)

Dr. Catherine André (Univ of Rennes, France)
Dr. Benoit Hedan (Univ of Rennes, France)

Stephen Green, moderator
Pat Long, taking meeting minutes

Informal Pre meeting.

1. Steve Green opened the meeting acting as Chair. He indicated that he was stepping in for BIWG President Martha Cehrs who was sadly unable to attend and sent her apologies. He welcomed everyone and especially those representing new member clubs.
2. Steve thanked the AFBS for their work in arranging the event and the venue.
3. Steve reiterated that the Berner-IWG is always open to all who speak for their clubs. Even in these days of electronic conference calls and social media it is still good to talk in the old fashioned way. It usually seems that many people actually come for personal motivation, not many are here with agreed agenda items from their clubs.
4. **Questionnaires** - Discussion about the replies from the questionnaires circulated to members in advance of the meeting. Afterwards there was agreement that this was a good idea to give awareness of items that people may wish to question or discuss at the meeting:
 - a. Online registration in the USA has increased registration. It is also possible to track dogs by microchip number. DNA registration has shown that some pedigrees are wrong. The AKC is working to increase registration numbers.
 - b. KBS has 100% of the dogs registered.
 - c. Austria has difficulty getting information about dogs and owners.
 - d. Belgium – every dog with or without pedigree is registered with microchip at DogID (if you want to read more about it: www.dogid.be/en/registration), dogs registered with SRSB-KMSH kennel club (the FCI recognised one - Belgium has more kennel clubs): DNA is tested in connection with microchipping and registration.
 - e. Czech Republic – the club controls the pedigree. The club checks all dogs before they breed. Everyone who wants to breed dogs must participate in the club show. All puppies are microchipped, but there are problems with reading the chips in different countries.
 - f. German club controls the pedigree.
 - g. France – all puppies are examined, results are sent to the AFBS, then sent to SCC. Not required to register the puppies.

- h. Spain – all pet dogs have to be spayed or neutered in Catalonia by 8 weeks of age. Note: if dogs are neutered after 12 – 18 months, it lessens the risk of hip dysplasia and cruciate ligament ruptures.
 - i. Sweden – all dogs are registered. Death date and cause of death are not recorded. SShK Health Registry, logon required to share information.
 - j. UK – there is only one kennel club, and they register everything with no liaison with the clubs although all records are made public. There are two levels of registration and any dog with registered parents can be registered on the basic system but there are some requirements to register dogs within the “Assured Breeder” program.
 - k. USA has “Breeder of Merit”
 - l. Switzerland – the KBS has “Golden Paw” – a breeder can get a “golden paw” if they provide once per year information on whether the dog is still alive or date of death and cause of death on at least 75% of the dogs they have bred.
- 5. Is there a way to motivate registration, or motivate sharing of health information?**
After a little discussion the Chair said this basically came down to the motivation of the people involved. Web master Birgitte Damsgaard was introduced to the meeting by the Chair and people urged to make contact with updates.
- 6. DNA registration:**
- a. USA – voluntary, required for all dogs entered in the National Specialty.
 - b. Czech Republic – all breeding dogs
 - c. Germany – DCBS requires it for all breeding dogs and random puppies in the litter
 - d. Belgium – required for all FCI pedigree puppies
 - e. Spain – the breed winners
 - f. AFBS – character test for age 2 and over
- 7. DM**
- a. Austria – DM Testing is still compulsory in all dogs used in breeding, but since January 1, 2017 clear x clear matings are now allowed.
 - b. USA – Pearson Fund created to help fund necropsied for at-risk dogs. Age of onset seen as early as 5 – 6 years, as late as 10 years.
 - c. Sweden – has seen no cases of DM, test is not required
 - d. UK – sixty dogs were tested by the club, owners free to test or not test.
 - e. Europe in general has seen few or no cases of confirmed DM, not seen as a significant serious health problem by any country, despite much discussion and comment on Social Media. This explained the difference in approach between the USA and most other countries.

At this point the pre meeting adjourned for lunch

Short Presentations

PICA by French veterinary student, Emelie Fritsch

They want to study PICA, serious disease, surgery needed when blockage occurs, and can cause death.

It's a well-known problem in Bernese.

The club has proposed a study, and she has accepted.

She has a questionnaire to collect the data.

Why dogs do it? Is there a correlation to other inflammatory digestive tract problems? Does stress play a role? Is there a genetic component?

The study is being started with French dogs.

Degenerative Myelopathy by Anne Thomas of Antagene

An explanation of the disease was given, a neuro degenerative progressive disease.

Age of onset is 8 years or older.

A definitive diagnosis can only be made by post mortem examination.

Many breeds are affected.

Paper in 2009 described the SOD1 mutation.

Paper in 2011 described the SOD1-B mutation only found in Bernese.

One gene, two mutations.

SOD1-A, exon 2, found in many breeds.

SOD1-B, exon 1, found only in Bernese.

If both SOD1 genes are mutated, the dog is at-risk for DM.

One dog was found by Antagene to have a gene containing both A and B mutations. This has never been found by any other research, they thought it might have been a recombinant DNA error, since the chance of a spontaneous mutation is one in 2 billion.

BIWG Meeting.

1. As acting Chair, Steve Green opened the meeting, standing in for President Martha Cehrs.
2. The BIWG extended best wishes to Martha and her sick dog Jazz.
3. The BIWG thanked the AFBS for providing the room and the hospitality.
4. **Austria** – Gerhard Kunz asked for DM information. Europe isn't seeing affected dogs, it seems to be a bigger problem in the USA. Should testing be recommended? In view of the extensive time used discussing this in the morning meeting the Chair suggested the subject was not discussed further at this time but could be revisited if time allowed later. This was agreed without objection.
5. **Workings of the BIWG** – For the benefit of newcomers the Chairman briefly outlined the history, purpose and procedures of the BIWG.
 - a. International activity for the breed started in 2000 with a KBS health seminar in Switzerland, then again in 2002.
 - b. 2003 in Germany was the very first talk of a group of some kind, but in 2005 in Salzburg the details really got addressed and the name and a constitution was agreed before the next meeting in 2006 in Como. This was loosely based on the UK Kennel Club Breed Council structure, with each club getting one vote.
 - c. Formed to share health information and initiatives with the aim of learning from each other and improving the health and longevity of the breed.
 - d. BIWG is composed of clubs and other breed dedicated organisations, not individuals, and gives a forum to communicate across the whole world of Bernese for the benefit of the breed.
 - e. The BIWG is definitely NOT about dictating any actions to clubs but giving them ideas and evidence to move forwards. For many valid and understandable reasons, what works in one country may not work in another.
 - f. Subject to available space independent individuals can attend meetings, and with the meeting's permission participate, but would not have any voting rights.
 - g. Important to communicate in both directions, and take information back to the clubs.
6. **Website**
 - a. **Club representatives should be sharing information and updating the BIWG website.** A reminder from the Chair that delegates at the meeting were members of the BIWG for the purpose of providing information to the rest of the Bernese world. The main way the group had decided to do this in the past was by means of a web site giving breed information. This would only work if the members updated the web site with BMD information from their own clubs and countries.
 - b. **How can we encourage website participation?** The Chair stated that each time we have a meeting there is some activity before and after and then things tend to stagnate until approaching the time of the next meeting. This was a repeated cycle we had tried to address before, and had discussed this morning, and it was down to all members to simply 'make the effort'. During discussion people accepted there was a need to utilise the website much more and a general agreement that members must try harder.
 - c. **Difficult to store large amounts of information, store links instead?**

It was pointed out that the information available from each country could be in different formats that cannot easily be structured in the same way so people could contribute in whatever format they found easiest. The most important thing was to contribute even if this was just to give links to their own web sites.

7. Would a closed Facebook page (Private Group) work better than the Yahoo Group?

Query raised from the floor, (during discussion at 6.), that a Facebook group for the BIWG might work better than the existing Yahoo mailing system which some people experienced difficulty with. After widely positive discussion about this it was agreed that the meeting Chair and Secretary would raise this with the absent President and advise the members at a later stage.

8. Country reports: The meeting then gave a chance for the representatives from each country to contribute updates and news from their countries.

- a. **UK** – The KC website provides EBVs for hips and elbows and a Coefficient of Inbreeding all based on the official KC records since computerization around 35 years ago. Too soon to know if it is helping as there is no compulsion to use them or standards to be complied with and some people seem to completely ignore them. In the UK some people feel cancer may have a genetic factor, but the commonest feeling is that it's just bad luck. The Death Survey launched at the end of 2016 has 158 dogs reported so far: 68% died of cancer (22% histio, 46% other cancers). Health CoOrdinator is trying to take the focus back from DM to Histio. Over the coming year or so every breed has to liaise with the KC and provide a health and welfare improvement plan specific to their breed. The KC are certainly getting more interactive on health, in a good way.
- b. **Denmark** – 2 dogs affected with Aseptic Meningitis (AM). There is no test, but the owners of the affected dogs want one. Wanted to ask if other clubs seeing AM? Generally a negative response although some countries accepted they had perhaps had just a case or two. [Suggestion: save DNA on affected dogs and near relatives. Dr. André could do genetic research.]
- c. **Italy** – 2016 collected blood samples for the histio study, 50 old breeding dogs. The second stage will be to test offspring – the test is on the CIABS website. Dogs are necropsied for COD.
- d. **France** – tested 50 dogs, females over 10 years, males over 9 years. Many were A, a few were C. Joëlle Bardet to send numbers.
- e. **Antagene** – can provide data tests by country. It's important for information to be used for research, but also important to share the information. Need to support science with information about the sampled dogs, health and date and cause of death.
- f. **Sweden** – recommending histio test for all breeding dogs, 144 tested and shared. Recommend no C x C breedings.
- g. **Antagene** – must keep C's in breeding pool, just don't mate to another C.
- h. **Canada** – Have an educational group that's more about health. Let them post a photo if the dog is in Berner-Garde.
- i. **USA** – survey has been completed, but results are not yet available. We have reproductive problems, gastrointestinal problems, and cancer is the number 1 problem. Registrations have increased due to AKC efforts. Pearson Fund established to pay for necropsy of DM at-risk dogs to confirm whether or not the dog has DM, and to use staining to confirm a histio diagnosis. Artificial insemination and natural breedings, progesterone testing, semen quality. In Europe, not much success with AK, better results in Australia and the USA.

9. The next meeting and health symposium is being planned for August 2018 in Amsterdam in conjunction with the Holland club's 40 year celebration. At the moment after that the next meeting will probably be the UK in 2021.

Steve Green thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions and closed the meeting.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Pat Long.

Health Presentations

Benoit Hedan

Gave the latest updates from Antagene and their ongoing research into SH in the BMD. Looking at a PTP mutation that was found in 53% of tumors. It's an MAP2K pathway mutation. Can be detected in plasma as a diagnostic tool. They are creating cell lines and testing targeted therapy, an MEK inhibitor.

This could be the very beginnings of an early diagnosis tool for 'Histio' and also observed tumours in laboratory conditions being negatively affected by treatment. Very keen to stress that this was just the very first, very small step or two on a very, very long journey but it was steps nevertheless.

Caroline Dufauvre de Citres

An Histiocytic Sarcoma Index Mate Selection tool has been developed. It provides the expected percentage of A, B, and C puppies in a litter of two parents with HS Risk test results. There are about 20,000 combinations of the 9 markers with 2 alleles each. They need €11,500 to create a web tool for breeders to use for free and, through the meeting, asked the breed if they could help raise this money.

Dr. Alain Fontbonne

Reproductive specialist, provided an excellent overview of the challenges of both the female and male issues surrounding successful breeding, health issues, and management.