

Summary of Berner IWG Meeting held Wednesday 21st September 2022 Forest Oak Farm, Lydney, Great Britain

Club Representatives present:

Gerhard Kunz, Austria, VSSÖ
Karoline Gsell, Austria, VSSÖ
Martina Kopecka, Czech Republic, KSSP
Birgitte Damsgaard, Denmark, DBSK
Satu Yla Mononen, Finland, FF-SS
Christine Malherbe, France, AFBS
Joelle Bardet, France, AFBS
Dr. Kira Martin, Hungary, MBE
Maddalena Manciani, Italy, CIABS
Wendy van Dijk, Netherlands, VBSH
Lina Martinsson, Sweden, SShK
Toril Melangen, Sweden, SShK
Steve Green, UK, BMDC of GB
Helen Davenport Willis, UK, NBMDC
Lori Jodar, USA, BernerGarde
Julie L Jackson, USA, BMDCA

Visitors present:

Ben Taylor, Australia
Carla Van Assche, Belgium
Maya Van Assche, Belgium
Jens Ramsing, Denmark
Lisbet Ramsing, Denmark
Camilla Hellevuo, Finland
Anne Kelly, Ireland
Tanya Shields, Ireland
Silvana Tedeschi, Italy
Marianne Ariens, Netherlands
Björg W. Andreassen, Norway
Line Løvland Øfstaas, Norway
Ksenija Steiner-Potočnik, Slovenia
Norbert Strahl, Spain
Ann Catrin Uppfeldt, Sweden
Lisa Nilsson, Sweden
Alexandra Megan Price, UK
Jacqueline Paterson, UK
Jeanette Green, UK
Julie Ann Wright, UK
Lianne Marsden, UK
Michelle Copeland, UK
Clark Powell, USA
Gary Galunas, USA

Steve Green, presiding
Birgitte Damsgaard, meeting minutes

IWG Meeting

1. Steve read out Martha's statement. This has been circulated through the io-group.
Be prepared to discuss her points in detail next year.

Discussion:

- *Austrian delegate says, she needs the IWG to point out to her members, that the breed's problems are international – not individual or "bad luck".*
- *It's important to meet in person and talk about the problems, and that we know each other.*
- *Maybe there are too many channels. Where is the place to put info?*
- *Who manages the fb-group? Maybe we should discuss the relevance of the website.*
- *How do we get people to participate in the io-group.*
- *Maybe make fb-group a public group.*

2. Club reports

- a. Austria:

- Small club 300 members. 35 litters/year. Litter sizes decreasing.
- Rules to regulate inbreeding and popular sire effect.
- Breeding rules: HD/ED.

- DM both exons. Carriers and at-risk-dogs can only be mated to free dogs. To reduce a run on free males, it was not allowed to mate two DM-free dogs, this rule does not apply any more.
- All breeding dogs must have the HS test and the HSIMS tool activated - but no limitations.
- Epilepsy occurs, but not much.
- Breeders must report deaths and causes, but not many do.
- Data collected by breeding wardens, but not much data yet.
- The club counsels breeders.
- Beginning to address renal problems.

Discussion:

Is money the issue when it comes to autopsies? Some clubs do reimbursements for autopsies. Lebendmeldung? Maybe we should write to the breeders and ask for the information. The club cannot put pressure on the breeders. Is DM even a problem in Austria? The problem is facebook. And that it is easy to test. The pressure came after a court case about an Appenzeller, and it spread to the Berner.

b. The Czech Republic:

- 4 breeds. 700 members. 600 Berner puppies last year. 6 pups/litter.
- Breeding dogs must pass a club breeding test including character test.
- HD/ED. DNA profile. Recommendations: HS test, DM test, OCD, eyes and heart evaluation
- Limited number of matings for males.
- HS test ??%. Testing at club functions.
- Club have statistic about all dog born - statistic of AOD (cause and age of death of each who inform club does not matter if breeding dog or not + statistic from all breeding dogs (dogs older than 7year are asking if still alive and if not when is date of death and cause
- Cancer is the biggest problem.
- And, also empty bitches, now 19%(but it is better than year 20 and 19 when we had more than 26%). Mostly due to infections (here we can only act through prevention and education, because we still have breeders who, in the case of a non-pregnant female, choose another cover dog (usually a stud) and then spread the possible infection to the next population).
- Shy dogs (but due to breeding and character test these dogs are not in breeding).
- Inbreeding restrictions for matting in Czech republic (however, it is very difficult for us to fight with imported puppies from abroad, especially from the Eastern bloc, where the level of inbreeding is very high).
- Limited number of matings for males based on age of stud male (from 2-7/year) if HS test then +1 mating/year.
- Testing at club functions.

c. Denmark - DBSK:

- Breeding test can be an alternative to showing.
- Lectures for club members and breeders about Histio-test, Gene pool management, C-sections and Pyometra, and Regula Bürge's lecture about function and conformation.
- Mentor system for new breeders, and some kind of education for stud dog owners is being planned.
- The Kennel Club has asked DBSK to look into the high frequency of C-sections.

Discussion:

How many are allowed, and how do you check it? In Sweden there is a welfare law against

more than 2 C-sections.

- d. Finland:
 - Huge club. 1000+ members. 300 puppies/year.
 - Kennel club rules inbreeding, age limits, hip/elbows rules and provides an open database with only certified information.
 - Berner club has database of lifespan and lifespan index.
 - Please use the Finnish information.
 - We need to publish what happens at the meetings.
 - Club subsidises autopsies and testing. People are doing Histio test – voluntary. The club pays for the testing.
 - The Finnish club is well off, because it has so many members and do fundraising. It's part of the culture to be a member. Almost no puppy mills. It's getting harder to get members, but they have a good magazine.

- e. France:
 - 700 members
 - New quality Charter will be effective from early 2023.
 - Still working on HS. Since the implementation of the HSIMS, we no longer prohibit CxC matings, but simply recommend not to exceed 40% of C.
 - We have like all countries the test for the 2 DM exons. We ask breeders to test all their breeding dogs and avoid combinations that will produce at-risk dogs. New Charter will specify whether this is a recommendation or an obligation.
 - The selection grids (from 1 to 6 points) validated by the Société Canine Française will be set up on January 1, 2023.
From the 2-point rating, only A and B are accepted in dysplasia
From the quotation 3 points the DM will be requested.
These rules are requested for the signatories of the Quality Charter but not by the French Canine Society
 - We asked Antagene to refine the B's for the SH test because we could see that the B's could give good or very bad results.
 - Working in the Health Commission on stomach twists
 - Continue to work with the CNRS. Old HS-C dogs (more than 7 years) are followed every 3 months. A blood test is sent to see if there is a way to detect HS before it occurs and perhaps have time to set up treatment.
 - Improving longevity remains the priority
 - Working on SH cancers but not only this cancer
 - The PICA (eating inappropriate things) is recurrent in bernese causing many occlusions.
 - Continue to work on character stability

Discussion:

PICA is also a problem in Grosser. Is it behavioural or hereditary? There have been studies to suggest a genetic reason. And many dogs die from it.

- f. Hungary:
 - Small club 30-40 litters/year. 20-25 kennels in 2 clubs. One for bernese, one for all 4 breeds.
 - Some breeders breed in the Serbian club, who does not have any rules. So, they get FCI-papers without rules.
 - Pet owners don't enter the clubs. Not many of them show their dogs.
 - The breed clubs set the rules (HD, ED, breeding test, ages of breeding dogs), the kennel club accepts those, and the kennel club sends the registration documents to the breed clubs for checking before issuing the pedigrees of the puppies.

- Breeding test exterior and temperament, same as in Germany valid for both clubs.
- HD and AD rules.
- DM is commonly tested, but not Histio. Breeders avoid to address the Histio problem.
- Breeders are not motivated to be open about death-causes.

Discussion:

Are there Kennel Club rules? Rules are checked by the breed clubs and then the Kennel Club issues pedigrees without questions. Therefore, the breeders can choose to register their puppies through the club with the most relaxed rules.

- g. Italy:
 - Working with researchers to develop diagnostic tests for DM. One test of the transmission of electrical impulses, the other is measuring a substance, that shows that nerve cells have died.
 - Measuring project – dogs are measured to compare to the standard.
- h. The Netherlands:
 - Two clubs. One club relaxed its rules, and lots of breeders went there. Not many rules from the kennel club.
 - A little over 10% of the puppies are bred within the clubs.
 - Breeding test.
 - Health committee has been inactive since Iris van Deurs left it. But now the new committee is trying to get things happening.
 - Trying to get breeders to put dogs in Berner-Garde.
 - Stimulates DM and HS testing. Will not use the tests to rule out any dogs but to advice.
 - The two clubs have different breeding tests. Not equally “hard”. One club uses the Swiss Character test. The other uses a conformation judge.
 - The more rules we make, the more people run away.
 - The breed clubs do not issue pedigrees. But there is an open database with test results. Dutch Dog Data.

Discussion:

Litter control? Yes.

Is there a plan for those who breed without pedigree? The health club can only give advice. How can the kennel club allow more than one breed club? In NL the smaller the breed, the more clubs.

- i. Sweden:
 - All 4 breeds.
Kennel club make the registration rules. Club rules are stricter.
1100 members. 330-377 puppies/year.
 - Biggest problems: Infertility. Empty bitches. Project with university collecting all data for matings, pregnancies, births, litter sizes, stillborn and so on. Males – collecting semen from 65 males. Semen quality is lower than other breeds.
Strategy: To investigate if there are family connections. This is a new project at the University UDS and they will investigate the progesterone levels before mating and on ultrasound in BMDs and other breeds.
 - Histio testing is recommended before breeding. Swedish geneticists have approved the HS-test and suggests that it may be useful as a breeding tool in the breed. Testing is increasing among breeders.
 - The club has an open health register and a club magazine.

Discussion:

Is health database mandatory? No, but most breeders do it.

In Sweden we say: don't test for DM, but if you do, don't mate 2 carriers.

Do insurance companies do statistics for DM? There are not that many cases.

Are there many litters from breeders not in SShK? Yes, some.

Early reabsorption mostly happens before day 28. Progesterone supplement should be given from day 21 to be effective.

- j. UK – BMDC of GB:
- One of 6 UK clubs. All have same status with the Kennel Club
 - All responsibility lies with the breeders. Clubs only recommend. All suggestions to restrict breeding has always been declined. Code of ethics are recommendations. Puppy registration is directly with the Kennel Club. You don't have to be a member.
 - HD/ED recorded by Kennel Club. No restrictions on breeding. Different hip scoring than most other countries. Foreign results are not accepted by the Kennel Club.
 - Kennel Club recommends not too high inbreeding and provide the tools.
 - SH-testing is probably increasing. Club is arranging SH-testing at shows and fundraising to offer reduced prices.
 - Voluntary death registration. Average AOD is dropping a bit. Biggest COD is HS and other cancers at 68%.
 - The BMDC of GB made a cruciate ligaments survey. 600 responses. 13% affected 80% of these had surgery
 - BMD was not in the top 20 of breeds with bloat.

Discussion:

Communication between the 6 clubs? – Not much. All very friendly though.

524 registered puppies last years.

Most clubs only do shows.

- k. USA:
- Increase in puppies produced--since 2016 a 37% increase, though this is similar for all breed registrations for AKC. Maybe due to Covid.
 - 11% of puppies AKC registered are from BMDCA breeders. This doesn't include the regional BMD clubs, with many breeders that are not BMDCA members.
 - Health surveys: our last was 2016 and we're due for a new survey.
 - BMDCA is providing subsidized pricing (\$50USD for members) for Antagene histio risk testing, at our annual National Specialty since 2018. Estimate 900 dogs tested to date. Many do not join the HSIMS database, for tested dogs. Some do join just to test a mating, and then pull their dog out again. Last year only 50% of US dogs tested were in HSIMS.
 - Anecdotal evidence for doxycycline preventing or reducing incidence of HS, and a task force is collecting data to study further.
 - Increase in gastro-intestinal problems, i.e., IBD, IBS, PLE and lymphangiectasia .
 - Birth defects – cleft palates produced in certain families. A genetic study is underway in Universitat Bern to find a possible mutation.
 - Recent repro vet conference found that BMD's have poorest male fertility, and highest rate of pyometra. Infertility is an ever increasing problem.

Discussion:

Some experience that internal parasite treatment increases birth defects. Seemingly the ingredients accumulate in the body.

3. *General discussion:*

J. Ramsing: Afraid that selecting for too many health issues decreases the quality of the exterior. We need a real strategy to increase the health.