

Overview of BIWG Meeting to International Health Symposium 2022 by Stand in Chair Steve Green (speaking in lieu of Martha Cehrs - absent BIWG President)

The BIWG held its usual meeting yesterday, the first in four years. In the absence of President Martha Cehrs I was asked to chair the meeting and therefore it falls to me to give a brief report to this meeting today.

The meeting agreed there was a need to reform the processes of the group to make it more effective but there was also some questioning of its real purpose in the bigger picture of the breed. There was **definite support** for the existence of the group as support for activities and sources of information and above all as a forum for FACE TO FACE meetings and everyone was tasked with liaising with their clubs and coming back before next year's next meeting with ideas for improving the function and effectiveness of the BIWG. One delegate talked about the group being support and validity for raising concerns actions in their country.

The reports of activities from the countries provided the usual mix of activities and initiatives. As well as the obvious and regular subjects of SH and DM being reported a few others were mentioned. Some countries reported very little interest in DM whereas others were involved in detailed studies or pressured by 'Facebook campaigns' into acting on DM.

A term new to most of us was "Pica" to refer to dogs that eat things they shouldn't. This was raised by the French delegation. A few people in the room understood it but for most people it was a new term and whilst we knew of individual dogs that would eat anything it was not a particular noted concern in our breed for most people.

We heard about how some richer larger clubs are able to heavily support health initiatives and other smaller countries with no resources for health. We heard about cultures where breeders are used to being completely controlled with, for example, breeding committees and others where there is no mechanism to exercise any control over breeders and complete responsibility falls on the breeders themselves.

Poor BMD fertility was amongst other subjects raised, being mentioned by several representatives, with a Swedish study finding definite evidence of Bernese being the breed with the poorest tested male fertility. The more I think about it the more I think this may be the biggest new challenge for our breed. After all, if we cannot get our dogs to reproduce then what age they might die and from what condition is of no relevance. I don't think the answer internationally is for 'fertility speakers', most modern breeders have a good understanding of progesterone testing and semen quality and supplementing with progesterone and these can be done locally. Specialist fertility vets are not even available in every country as far as I understand.

When we meet we need to discuss what we know about why this is happening and who is doing what to find out. The Swedish study sounded a good start and I look forward to seeing more about this and maybe looking at it and developing something similar in difference countries might be the way to go.