



Abbreviated Notes of DBRG Meeting 7 June 2018

Royal Veterinary College, 4 Royal College Street, Kings Cross, London, NW1

Members present: Katharine Williams (KW), Fiona Cooke (FC), Rowena Packer (RP), Carol Fowler (CF), David Grimsell (DG), Andrew Gillon (AG), Dan O'Neill (DON), Clare Rusbridge (telephone link), Charlotte Mackaness (CM)

Apologies: Sheila Crispin, Gudrun Ravetz, Lesley Field, Stephen Charlton

Guests: Ian Seath, Emily Davies

The Associate Membership Sub-Group (KW, CM, FC, CF) met prior to the main meeting (1.00-2.00pm)

1. Matters Arising

Printed copies of the **KC Breed Watch Booklet, Breed Watch Illustrated Guide and DBRG Policy Position Paper on the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the Protection of Offspring** were distributed. Attention was also drawn to the Kennel Club's Annual Report now available online. It was noted that the Kennel Club's Dog Health Group (DHG) no longer published an annual report. The work of this group and its various sub groups is naturally of interest to members of DBRG.

2. New Trustees

Clare Rusbridge, Katharine Williams and Charlotte Mackaness were formally adopted as trustees.

KW distributed the Charity Commission's Guidance for Trustees which outlines the role and responsibilities of all Charity Trustees.

Specific roles for current trustees present are:

CF – Chairman; Secretary; representing DBRG at external meetings; website content

KW – Deputy Chairman; legal advisor; governance of the charity; Chair, Associate Membership Scheme Working Group

CM – Promoting DBRG on Social Media (FB, Twitter); providing information about our activities and support of other organisations where appropriate; administration and liaison with the University of Surrey Vet School regarding DBRG Symposium; member of the Associate Membership Scheme working group; responsibility for abbreviated version of Notes of Meeting

DON – Ensuring circulation of relevant scientific papers; feeding back information from the Bracycephalic Working Group (BWG); representing DBRG on the CFSG Conformation Sub-group; link with Royal Veterinary College

DG – Expert on the Animal Welfare Regulatory System; first author of some key DBRG Position Papers; Treasurer; animal welfare researcher

FC – Dog Behaviour/Socialisation advice; role of local authorities in animal welfare; presenting at 2019 DBRG Symposium; member of Associate Membership Working Group

LB - Liaison with breed clubs and Kennel Club

3. Associate Membership Scheme (KW)

It was decided at a previous meeting that we would go ahead with an Associate Membership Scheme as a way of reaching out to a wider audience and acquiring some funds. A meeting of the sub-group took place prior to the main meeting (KW, FC, CM, CF) at which it was thought there could be different types of Associate Membership. This would entitle members to have discounts for DBRG merchandise and Symposium tickets and would enhance veterinary students' CV. A version of the Notes of Meetings could also be sent to Associate Members as well as DBRG position papers and advice on aspects of dog breeding. On joining there would also be a free gift of a DBRG note pad, pen or key ring. Our links with Surrey University Vet School, RVC and BVA could potentially help with this. CM suggested that a prize draw could be awarded for those who join by a specific date. AG suggested having a Members Page on the DBRG website with access restricted to Members and Associate Members only. It was agreed that the Scheme should be implemented as soon as possible and the Associate Membership Working Group will continue to work on this.

4. Breed Health Strategy (Ian Seath, Chairman, Dachshund Breed Council)

In describing the Dachshund Breed Council's approach to a breed improvement strategy, Ian pointed out that the KC's Breed Health and Conservation plans, led by Katy Evans, had almost completed its first phase focusing on the category one breeds, plus Cavaliers. The Dachshund breed will be in the second phase group.

Ian pointed out that in the Dachshund breed the strategy was to enable people to behave differently for the benefit of the dogs. He acknowledged that the 'elephant in the room' was that the Dachshund breed itself was an 'exaggerated' breed.

In working with the International Partnership for Dogs (IPFD) a holistic approach is being taken (health, temperament, physical exaggerations, working ability) to make decisions on what might need to be improved. In other words it's not about DNA testing – a strategy doomed to fail. A strategy also needs to include the demand side and influencing buyers which is a major challenge.

DON made the point that tackling one disease, for example hip dysplasia, cannot be regarded as a health plan as other issues need to be taken into consideration.

Ian also spoke of the language used for improvement. Much of it is vague and aspirational. What is far more important is a statement about what you are actually going to do. A plan needs to be translated into specific actions within a time scale and include engagement with breeders, owners, and potential buyers. An Annual Health Report is produced. The Kennel Club's Breed Health Strategy document is followed by the Dachshund Breed Council.

Scientific data is vital but with some breeds there is enough data and constantly seeking for new data can be a way of putting off real action.

A problem of breed popularity can be that people buy on the basis of looks without understanding the temperament traits and background of a breed. For example, Dachshunds were formerly a working breed and are therefore not a lapdog. They are feisty and there can be temperament problems.

The Dachshund Breed Council has an online reporting tool on which owners and breeders can report any health or temperament problems. CF commented that all breeds should be directed to do this. Also that reporting the age of death of a dog would be extremely good data for breed clubs to collect. Even better would be if the age and cause of death (if known) should be recorded on a pedigree certificate. A further cultural shift would be if responsible breeders kept in touch with owners so that health information and age of death is taken into account in future breeding decisions.

The Dachshund Breed Council is active on social media and publishes a monthly newsletter for breeders and owners. There is a specific FB page for back disease. Three members of the health sub-committee are pet owner advisors who are not members of breed clubs and do not show their dogs.

A success story is Lafora's disease (a form of epilepsy) which has had a DNA test since 2005. Results are now sent to the KC and recorded in the Breed Record Supplement. Breeders who are not DNA testing are contacted by the breed club and persuaded to do so. DBRG members felt that other breeds could do the same.

Ian pointed out that so long as the breed exists and people want them the Breed Council must do all it can to reduce the health problems by collecting data and being open about the data. Another essential is to have a breed health committee that are genuine committed to improving the health of a breed with ideally a member of the veterinary profession as part of the committee.

5. Dog Breed Health Website Update

CF outlined the changes recently made to the Breed Pages on the DBH website. Based on the new edition of '*Breed Pre-dispositions to Disease in Dogs and Cats*' (Gough, Thomas, O'Neill) the list of Diseases on the website has been updated. At the same time every effort was made to ensure that diseases with more than one name were not duplicated. Note that diseases covered by the Canine Health Schemes and for which there is a DNA test are listed separately on each breed page.

A further development is that phase one of the Harmonisation of Genetic Testing in Dogs (HGTD) has been completed by Aimee Llewellyn-Zaidi on behalf of the International Partnership for Dogs (IPFD). <https://dogwellnet.com/ctp>

Emily Davies prepared a list of these from the HGTD website and CF has updated the available genetic tests for dog breeds on the DBH Breed Health pages with a link to the HGTD website. Many thanks to Emily for helping with this work

As a result of the discussions between CF and Brenda Bonnet (IPFD), DBRG has become a collaborative partner with the IPFD.

Two issues remain to be resolved: prevalence and severity data and the quality of the DNA tests. As the Breed Health and Conservation plans are rolled out, the priorities for health testing will be identified. A simple method for the DBH website would be to highlight those tests.

6. Fundraising

Wotton-under-Edge volunteer, Sally Davies, has made several applications on our behalf to various funding bodies. So far without success. CF has also made applications.

DON suggested that the Symposium was a tangible event that we could request funding for. CM suggested open access and free webinars which could be put on to the website. Speakers might be prepared to give their time but filming and recording would need to be paid for.

Setting the idea of webinars in motion requires contacting someone with the technical expertise. AG will try to find an appropriate person to contact through the BVA.

Insufficient funds remains a key issue for DBRG.

7. Canine Health Schemes (AG)

Andrew and CF with the help of the BVA marketing team have provided a version of the Canine Health Scheme (CHS) for the DBRG website. The Scheme includes the Eye Scheme, Hip Dysplasia (HD), Elbow Dysplasia (ED), and Chiari Malformation / Syringomyelia (CMSM). The idea is to provide information about the Schemes to the general public so that a breeder can be asked about them. Examples of the certificates are also provided so that prospective owners are familiar with what they look like and what the scoring means. If owners are familiar with the Schemes and ask breeders, this will encourage breeders to make greater use of them. The BVA CHS staff are keen to educate the public about them and understand the scoring system. There is evidence that some breeders try to mislead the public by showing them false documents.

As part of the BVAs strategy in promoting the Schemes more widely, Andrew is working with the Kennel Club Health Team and Assured Breeders Scheme (ABS) in order to make the ABS more robust and developing a closer relationship with the KC. The BVA is also building a new website which will include information about the Schemes for vets, breeders and the puppy buying public. For the public, there will be links back to the DBRG and Dog Breed Health websites.

Note that a further update since the meeting is that the BVA has announced the launching of an online submission for the HD and ED Schemes results. This will make it easier for vets, allow the CHS team to process the results more quickly, and make data collection more efficient. It is also the first step in reducing instances where a client receives and 'unofficial score' from the vet but does not submit the results to the BVA.

8. Sixth Form College IT Project

KW has liaised with a teacher of Information Technology at Collyers Sixth Form College, Horsham, Diane Dowling. Diane will supervise one or two A level students who will embark on a project to increase the Google ratings for the DBRG website and Dog Breed Health website.

9. New Mitral Valve Disease Scheme for CKCS

A new Heart Scheme for the CKCS has been developed by the Kennel Club and Veterinary Cardiovascular Society (CVS) in consultation with the CKCS breed clubs. It will trial 100 dogs over the coming months and will be rolled out to all Cavalier breeders and owners later in 2018. The aim is to reduce the prevalence of MVD, a deadly heart disorder which effects 40% of the breed in the UK.

The Scheme is modelled on the Danish system which has seen a 75% reduction in risk of MVD in 10 years. The new Scheme includes guidance on breeding designed as a traffic light

system which will indicate the degree of MVD in a dog. An update on the trial will be available at the end of 2018.

Breeding Guidelines:

Mitral valve regurgitation murmur is graded 0-6 with 0 indicating no murmur and 6 indicating the most severe murmur (and hence the most severe mitral valve regurgitation).

MVP is graded 0-3 as follows:

- 0 - none
- 1 - mild
- 2 - moderate
- 3 - severe

Dogs with grade 0 or 1 murmur plus grade 0 or 1 MVP, or dogs considered to have an ‘innocent’ murmur, (both categorised as green under the traffic light system shown below) are considered to be at the lowest risk of developing clinical mitral valve disease and to represent the lowest breeding risk. Dogs with a grade 2 murmur OR grade 2 MVP (but not both), denoted amber, have a greater risk of developing a passing on the condition to offspring. The KC advises that, to reduce the genetic risk of MVD in offspring, that only amber dogs in excellent health, and with good results from other screening schemes, may be used cautiously for breeding with particular care to use mates which have been categorised as green under this traffic light scheme, preferably at 4 years of age or older. Dogs categorised as amber at 4 or 6 years of age (or older) are considered to represent less of a risk than those categorised as amber at the first examination at 18months-2 years. Dogs which are categorised as red, with a grade 3 murmur or higher, grade 3 prolapse or significant congenital heart disease represent the greatest breeding risk and it is advised that these dogs are not used for breeding.

Murmur grade /Mitral Valve Prolapse	Murmur grade 0	Murmur grade 1	Murmur grade 2	Murmur grade 3+
Mitral Valve Prolapse 0				
Mitral Valve Prolapse 1				
Mitral Valve Prolapse 2				
Mitral Valve Prolapse 3				

Green: dogs with grade 0 or 1 murmur plus 0 or 1 MVP
 Dogs considered to have an ‘innocent’ murmur (possibly up to grade 2)
 Amber: dogs with grade 2 murmur OR grade 2 MVP
 Red: dogs with grade 2 murmur AND grade 2 MVP
 Dogs with grade 3 murmur or higher
 Dogs with grade 3 prolapse
 Dogs with significant congenital heart disease

It is recommended that dogs are as old as possible when used for breeding and the results of older relatives are taken into account.

DBRG notes that the success of the Danish system is due to the fact that use of the heart scheme in Denmark is compulsory whereas in the UK it is not. We are of the view that only compulsory screening will improve the situation in the UK and we urge the Kennel Club to give this serious consideration.

10. Use of Social Media

Although DBRG uses Facebook and Twitter it was felt that members do not make enough use of social media. This is an area where we can reach out to more people, especially veterinary students and dog owners.

11. Update on Brachycephalic Working Group (BWG)

DON provided us with an update on the nine action points set by the BWG.

12. CFSG Big Tent

A brief outline of the Big Tent Meeting was provided. In particular the New Licensing Regulation Risk-Based System, outlined by Mark Berry. Attendees also discussed the key issues they felt should be taken forward. This included the Protection of Offspring and Conformation issues.

Date of next meeting: 6th September 2018 RVC, College Street London