

DBC News

April 2011

Dachshund Breed Council



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Breed Council launches two new health initiatives

The Dachshund Breed Council met on Sunday 10th April 2011, with representatives from fourteen clubs attending and apologies received from the other five clubs. The major part of the Council meeting agenda was devoted to health and welfare topics, with updates being presented on the current priority conditions.

The Council agreed to support two new initiatives:

- ▲ To work with the Animal Health Trust to carry out a research programme to identify a possible DNA test for back problems (Intervertebral Disc Disease)
- ▲ To conduct a longitudinal Breed Health Survey in order to get up-to-date information on the prevalence of health issues, age/cause of death and other breed welfare matters

The Council will need to raise approx. £10,000 to fund the DNA research programme and believes this is the breed's most important health issue to investigate. We have held initial discussions with the Animal Health Trust about the potential approach for this project. We are still in very early discussions, but it looks like we may need to find about 50 Dachshunds that have had Type 1 Disc herniations and 50 that have survived to beyond 9 years old with no herniation. DNA swab samples from each of these groups can then be analysed with a view to identifying the gene, or more likely - genes, associated with back problems.

It is hoped that the Breed Survey will be carried out during 2012 and will build on the data obtained through the current health reporting system. With our current online reporting approach the results are always going to be biased towards "health problems" and we have no way of knowing the real picture as far as disease prevalence is concerned. For that, we need to carry out a Breed Survey, recording the health of a set of dogs over a period of time, such as a year.

More information on both these initiatives will be circulated as we develop our plans, but owners' and breeders' views would be welcomed.

cord1 Retinal Degeneration (PRA)

Dr. Cathryn Mellersh from the Animal Health Trust had provided the Council with an up-to-date summary of the research on cord1 PRA in Miniature Dachshunds and this is available to [download](#) from the Council's Health website.

The overwhelming conclusion from these intensive studies is that the previously reported *RPGRIPI* mutation, upon which the widely used cord1 DNA test is based, causes cone photoreceptors to malfunction and together with an additional mutation in a modifying gene causes early onset cone-rod

degeneration. The cord1 mutation is recessive, meaning no dog need be removed from the breeding population and every dog can be bred from, providing that their genotype at the *RPGRIP1* gene is taken into account when choosing a mate.

So, if they are cord1 "Carriers" or "Affecteds" they can be mated, BUT ONLY to "Clear" dogs in order to avoid producing "Affected" puppies.

A pictorial explanation of how to avoid matings that produce Miniature Dachshunds clinically at risk of cord1 Retinal Degeneration (PRA) can be [downloaded here](#).

The AHT believes it is close to developing a test to identify the second mutation which affects the age of onset of cord1 retinal degeneration.

Cord1 screening is now recommended for all three Miniature varieties.

Lafora Disease in Miniature Wirehaired Dachshunds

The Wirehaired Dachshund Club presented an update on the Lafora Testing situation and hopes to be able to make an announcement on the planned next steps to implement a full screening test to identify "Clear", "Carrier" and "Affected" dogs within the next two months.

An application has been made to the Kennel Club Charitable Trust for funding to support the testing programme and the Breed Clubs have committed to provide a matching amount of money.

Information for owners of dogs affected by Lafora Disease can be found at www.laforadogs.org as well as an [information sheet](#) on the Council's Health [website](#).

Breed Standard

The Council agreed to review the current lists of colours that the Kennel Club uses for its registration database following feedback from a number of breeders that a few recognised colours needed to be added. The lists will be reviewed by the Smooth, Long and Wire Clubs, who will make recommendations to the next Council meeting.

Following discussions by Clubs after the last Council meeting a unanimous decision was made to ask the Kennel Club to alter the Colour Clause of the Breed Standard. The proposed change is underlined, below:

All colours permitted but no white permissible, save for a small patch on chest which is permitted but not desirable. The dapple pattern is expressed as lighter coloured areas contrasting with the darker base. Neither the light nor the dark colour should predominate. Double dapple (where varying amounts of white occurs all over the body in addition to the dapple pattern) is unacceptable. Piebald, Tricolour and the dilute colours Isabella and Blue are not acceptable colours. Nose and nails black in all colours except chocolate/tan and chocolate dapple where they are brown.

Piebald and Tricolour are considered to be unacceptable because they contain large patches of white. Blue and Isabella are dilute versions of chocolate and black/tan respectively. They are caused by the recessive d gene and, in both cases, dogs are significantly more prone to skin diseases such as Colour Dilution Alopecia. The Council believes that Blue and Isabella should be stated as unacceptable colours in the Breed Standard because of their adverse health and welfare consequences.

Ethical behaviour

The Council receives letters and e-mails from time to time complaining about apparent unethical behaviour of exhibitors, judges and breeders. Many of the issues related to breeders are fully covered by either our Code of Ethics, or the requirements of the Kennel Club's Accredited Breeder Scheme (ABS). In the case of ABS members we report our concerns to the KC for investigation and action. The KC has also written to breeders who continue to produce cord1 PRA Affected puppies advising them of the risks of this practice.

The Council discussed the issue of breeding from bitches on consecutive seasons and wishes to remind people that our Code of Ethics advises that bitches should not have more than one litter in a 12 month period (except with veterinary advice).

The issue of ethical behaviour of exhibitors and judges is altogether more sensitive and subject to debate. Complaints should be made, in the first instance, to the Secretary of the Club concerned. Sometimes, it is unclear whether or not any rules have been broken and there are many "grey areas" open to interpretation.

A recent contribution from the Leonberger Breed Notes correspondent Lynette Hodge, attempting to clarify some of the issues, was as follows:

The Kennel Club has rules covering some points but there are particular grey areas where there are no clear regulations. I therefore thought it would be helpful if I called the show department to get clarification on some of the points that came up during our conversation and which have long since been a cause for concern among those who show. The questions I asked were: it is acceptable for exhibitors to travel to shows in the same vehicle with their judge? Is it acceptable for exhibitors to enter under judges who are their employers or employees? Is it acceptable to enter under judges who have stayed at the home of an exhibitor in the preceding year/ 18 months? Is it acceptable to enter at shows where family members are judging or under someone who shares or has shared a kennel name?

The KC confirmed that while these would not be considered to be in breach of regulations, they would be considered to be unacceptable. It would strongly advise against all the above as it believes exhibitors must give serious thought as to how their actions would be viewed by the public and other exhibitors. It was pointed out that Chairman Ronnie Irving shares these concerns and regularly comments on this subject in his reports in the Kennel Gazette. The public perception of what is expected of judges is becoming more and more important to the KC, especially when some shows are struggling to survive because exhibitors have become so disenchanted with what they feel is unfair face judging, that they no longer show.

The KC told me it has no desire to introduce lots of rules to cover each and every one of these eventualities that it would expect should be governed by exhibitors' own common sense. However, if it is brought to its attention, it will certainly take note of those involved and may consider action. It all comes down to integrity and there is nothing to stop judges and exhibitors from doing any of the above, apart from the damage to their reputation, so it is down to each individual and their conscience.

I also discussed the question of entering under a friend which is always a tricky one. The KC agreed that if we have friends who are judging and they spend time with our families and dogs then it would not be considered acceptable to enter under them. However, if a friend has not visited our home or had contact with our dogs for at least a year/ 18 months, then there really is no reason not to enter under them. We all have friends who are 'telephone' friends but who have never visited

our homes and it would be insulting not to give them an entry as it implies they don't have the honesty and integrity to judge the dogs, rather than who is on the end of the lead. With a relatively small community of Leo people who exhibit, if we all refrained from entering under everyone we knew or spoke to on the phone, then there would hardly be any entries at shows. But, there has to be a line which is not crossed and perhaps everyone needs to consider what that line is.
[reproduced with permission]

Our Code of Ethics includes the following:

- ▲ As a judge I will act with courtesy and integrity to all exhibitors, I will judge according to the standard of points and will consider as part of my decisions the temperament and physical condition of the dogs judged, in particular exhibits which appear thin and undernourished should be seriously penalised.
- ▲ As an exhibitor I will enjoy and applaud other people's success, be welcoming to newcomers and ensure as far as I am able that my dogs behave quietly at a show.

Critiques

It is a Kennel Club requirement that judges submit critiques to the dog press and this forms part of the judging contract. The Breed Council wrote to over a dozen judges at the end of 2010 asking about missing critiques. As a result, a number of names do not appear on our 2011 Judging Lists and those people will be reported to the Kennel Club.

The Council has recommended that Breed Clubs include in their judging contracts a requirement for judges to send a copy of their critique to the dog press within 6-8 weeks of the show and include a copy to the Secretary.

The Council also agreed that its education programmes should include guidance on critique-writing. This will be included both in seminars and as part of the Mentoring programme.

Clearly, not everyone is good with the written word and some people don't find it easy to get their thoughts down on paper. However, we do seem to have far too many “*nice head and eye*”, “*enjoyed his day out*” and “*what more can be said about this dog*” type of critiques which tell us absolutely nothing.

Our revised Breed Standard has been in operation for over two years now and yet we are still reading critiques that describe “*lovely and low to ground*” (inevitably meaning little ground clearance, rather than height at the shoulder) and “*would prefer more length*”. The Breed Standard calls for a dog that is *moderately long and low with no exaggeration, compact, well muscled body, with enough ground clearance to allow free movement. Height at the withers should be half the length of the body, measured from breastbone to the rear of thigh.*

Breed Council appointments

Roger Sainsbury BVM&S, MRCVS was appointed Chairman of the Council's Health and Welfare Sub-committee, following the retirement of Anne Moore. Helen Geeson joined the H&W Sub-committee alongside Judy Squires, Valerie Skinner and Lesley McNaughton.

At the Council's Annual General Meeting Ian Seath was re-elected as Chairman for a further three year term and Anne Moore was elected as Vice-Chair for a one year term.

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Website: <http://www.dachshundbreedcouncil.org.uk>

Health Reporting Website: <http://www.uk-dachshund-health-report.org.uk>

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