



DBRG: Health Testing Must Be Expanded To Tackle Inherited Health Issues

The DBRG fully supports the Kennel Club's National Canine Health Testing Week and its aim of highlighting the importance of health testing before breeding. However, the group encourages the Kennel Club to go further in expanding health testing by seeking ways to make some schemes mandatory for all Kennel Club registered dogs.

DBRG was pleased to see the Kennel Club announce its adoption of the Danish Heart Scheme for Cavalier King Charles Spaniels (CKCS) – a breed 20 times more likely than others to suffer from Mitral Valve Disease (MVD).

Vet and DBRG member Pete Wedderburn comments: "This pre-breeding heart test for Cavaliers is a welcome development. At the moment, it is planned to be voluntary but I do hope that it will be extended first to become compulsory for all Kennel Club Assured Breeders and, secondly, mandatory for the parents of all Kennel Club registered puppies."

Dr Wedderburn concludes, "The studies in Denmark revealed a 73 per cent reduction in the risk of MVD. The Kennel Club scheme will follow the Danish model but, crucially, will be voluntary. The Danish experience demonstrates that serious actions – making testing compulsory – are the only way to seriously influence the astonishingly high incidence of heart disease in this breed,"

In response to previous calls for mandatory breed health testing, the Kennel Club has expressed the view that the use of Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) is a better option.

"Estimated Breeding Values are an important tool and could have a very positive impact on canine health," DBRG founder Carol Fowler explains. "However, more effort and action is required to make this a reality. In order to calculate estimated breeding values for a genetic condition, you need to collect data from phenotypic testing/screening. Furthermore the accuracy of the EBVs depends very much on large numbers of animals providing the phenotypic data."

Currently there are EBVs for Hip Dysplasia (HD) for some 28 breeds and Elbow Dysplasia (ED) for a smaller number of breeds. Calculations of EBVs were possible because data from the BVA/KC Hip Dysplasia and Elbow Dysplasia Health Schemes had been collected over forty years based on voluntary screening.

DBRG is concerned that it may take decades before EBVs can be provided for other conditions. In the case of heart disease, it is essential that all Cavalier King Charles Spaniel breeders adopt the new Heart Scheme and that the test results are made public and clearly shown on pedigree certificates. Results, both good and bad, must be submitted to and recorded by the KC to provide EBVs for heart disease in Cavaliers.

November 2016 - Ends

DBRG is an organisation dedicated to improving the health and welfare of dogs through responsible breeding. It was founded in 2013 and became a Charitable Trust in 2015. Members of the DBRG

include veterinary specialists, dog welfare and law experts, breeders and dog owners.

For more information about the DBRG please visit www.dogbreedingreformgroup.uk or contact Carol Fowler carol@cavaliercampaign.com or call 01453 843944