

ISCA Health Committee report November 2010

The Health committee is an active and interested group of ISCA members. At our meeting during the National 2010, we added three new members to the committee, Laurice Mays, Kris Kamhotz and Christine Boutwell. All are very honored to have been asked and excited about contributing to our efforts.

The Health clinic at the National is run by Linda Kalmar DVM. She does a fantastic job not only coordinating her own tasks, but getting a great committee to help. Linda will once again be spearheading the clinic at the Oklahoma National—and we could always use more help! There are many jobs to be done so that we process the blood samples in an efficient manner, so that members don't have to wait too long to have the blood samples pulled on their dogs. Many of the jobs are simple clerical ones so no veterinary expertise needed! If you are interested in helping, please contact Linda or myself.

One facet of the Health clinic is for us to collect DNA samples for CHIC (Canine Health Information Center). These samples are taken and stored at NO COST to anyone participating at the National. DNA research is the wave of the future, and it's important for our breed that we have a DNA bank that includes samples of both normal dogs, and dogs affected by disease.

Please take advantage of this great benefit—all costs are paid by the ISCA Foundation--and remember to update your dog's health profile at regular intervals with CHIC once we've placed the DNA on file.

We still need Irish setters with HOD, as well as siblings, half siblings, sire and dam of affecteds. Dr. Murphy is making headway with our DNA research, but we need more samples!

But it's not just HOD that is targeted. ANY disease, rare or common, will benefit by having affected DNA on file. This includes things like thyroid disease, skin disease, chronic ear problems, cancer of any kind, and orthopedic diseases like hip dysplasia, stifle injuries, etc. So please take advantage of this, and bring as many dogs as possible to the clinic!

And now the alarming “wake up call” part of this report!

Part of the health clinic also included collecting samples for Optigen for PRA & CLAD testing. This is a great service to Irish setter breeders, since there is a huge discount if you fill out and pay online with Optigen, and you don't have any shipping costs, as ISCA foundation pays for that as part of our health mission.

There were some alarming results at this years clinic. Below is the info received directly from Optigen:

During the 3rd quarter of 2010 OptiGen tested 9 Irish Setters for PRA and 3 Irish Setters for CLAD. The breakdown is as follows....

PRA - 9
Normal - 4
Carrier - 5
Affected - 0

CLAD - 3
All Normal.

Since you usually as the location of Carrier dogs I thought I would share

before being asked....they came from the US.

Sincerely,

Becky Iddings

Administrative Support Associate

What this tells us is that we must be vigilant about PRA testing! Since the identity of the dogs is confidential, we have to hope that these are dogs for which a known carrier was bred to a clear, and the owners are trying to identify the clear dogs from the litter. That is a scientific and totally appropriate and ethical way for breeders to use valuable carriers.

However if these dogs are a result of a random screening for PRA, and their owners had NO idea they could be potential carriers, that's another issue. That would mean that there are Irish setter breeders who either have no knowledge of the importance of testing for PRA, or they have become reliant on the verbal assurance that their dogs are PRA clear, without ever seeing the proof of the dogs PRA testing status.

Dr Aquirre was very clear to ISCA when he said that it was important for breeders to continue to test for PRA, as well as having at least one exam during their lifetime by a veterinary ophthalmologist to assure that other eye diseases don't crop up undetected in our breed.

If your dog is tested for PRA and is NORMAL, it is recommended that after 2 generations, the progeny is re-tested. Simply explained this means if your bitch Mary is PRA DNA Normal, and she is bred to Bill who is PRA DNA normal, the puppies in that litter are the first generation of this line. These puppies would be eligible for a PRA Gene Tested Ancestry normal (GTA) number. (see the ISCA website http://www.irishsetterclub.org/current_research.html for full information on how to obtain that number)

When those puppies are bred (to either a PRA Normal or a GTA normal) this would be your second generation clear. When you produce your 3rd generation from these dogs, **THIS IS THE TIME WHEN YOU DOGS SHOULD BE RETESTED** via Optigen, to affirm that they are PRA normal via DNA.

I would be happy to speak to any Irish setter breeder who is may want to have this clarified or explained in a different way that is more understandable to them. **It is URGENT that all breeders take the threat of PRA seriously.** The price for genetic testing for PRA is so inexpensive now—and breeders can avoid the heartache and tension of breeders in years gone by who had to do test matings on their dogs to clear them! Irish setters is one of the breeds that can be declared free of PRA for life—unlike other breeds that must test during the dogs lifetime to see if the status changes. So there is just NO excuse for having random PRA dogs show up!