



WHI Newsletter

The Independent Breed Health Group

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"To provide a platform for the reception and transmission of information about the health and well-being of the Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier"

Issue: Twenty-Three

October 2012

Genetic Testing for PLN-Associated Variant Genes.

This research, originating in America and with implications for all Wheatens world-wide, provides genetic testing for PLN-Associated Variant genes for the first time. This how the researchers in the United States introduced this breakthrough to the Wheaten world:

The following is reproduced with the permission of the SCWT Club of America.

Genetic Testing for PLN-Associated Variant Genes

After years of research supported by hundreds of Wheatens and their owners and breeders, Dr. Meryl Littman and Dr. Paula Henthorn at Penn Vet identified mutations associated with PLN in two genes. As a result, there is now a test using a non-invasive cheek swab, which an owner can use and submit to the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine for interpretation – no blood test, no complicated shipping, no trip to the vet!

What's Next?

For research purposes, Drs. Littman and Henthorn would like to collect as many swabs as possible to understand the distribution of clears and carriers, and help give us informed genetic counseling.

Individual owners can now submit samples from their own dogs to learn their genetic status and the associated risk for developing PLN or passing it on to their offspring. At upcoming specialties and club events, cheek swab tests will be available. Breeders and owners will have the option to submit these samples anonymously or, for a fee, receive the results on their own dogs. Additionally, individuals can obtain a test kit directly from Penn Vet and return the swab via regular mail.

WHI has actively supported this project by distributing the cheek swabs needed to collect DNA for UK dogs. This has been made possible by the generous involvement of both the SCWT Club of America Endowment Inc. and the American SCWT Genetic Research Foundation who have met the costs of purchasing and shipping the swabs to us.

The SCWT Club of GB also obtained and distributed cheek swabs.

From a research perspective it was important that as many Wheatens as possible took part in the initial phase of the research which was to establish the prevalence of the PLN-Associated Variant Genes in the Breed.

Recently Dr Littman made an important announcement about this part of the project, which can be read in full on our website by following this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/8w7hjb7>

Dr Littman has also made some **extremely important** observations about the interpretation of the test results and the appropriate response of owners and breeders to their results.

This message is also on our website and should be read in its entirety by following the link below. We would urge you to read her statement carefully:

<http://tinyurl.com/98afc69>

Hooray!! It's the Newsletter!



House of Softy Ofelia (Ruby) aged 10 mths
Picture- Kathy McLoughlin

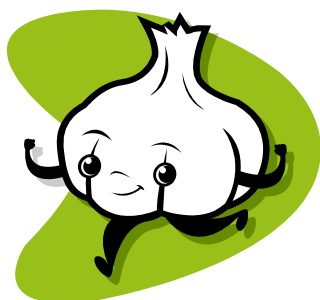
Garlic: The Facts

"When it comes to your pet's health, do you want to follow facts or fears? Unfortunately, garlic has come under attack. This is primarily as a result of garlic's close cousin onion's reputation for triggering haemolytic or "Heinz factor" anaemia (where circulating red blood cells burst) through its high concentration of thiosulphate. With onions, a single generous serving can cause this reaction. Garlic simply DOES NOT CONTAIN THE SAME CONCENTRATION of this compound! In fact, it is barely traceable and readily excreted (not stored in the body).

Despite this fact, garlic is falling victim to mass hysteria spread through the internet. Yes, there are 51,174 sites devoted to warning about the "toxicity" of garlic, this hysteria has even prompted the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Centre to place a warning on garlic although there is little scientific data to back this claim other than the fact that thiosulphate is also found in garlic. Yet, there are also over 400,000 sites still proclaiming its benefits, many of them from reputable holistic veterinarians who have widely used garlic in their practice for many years! How can an herb suddenly turn so bad?!

There is no doubt that onion, due to its concentration of thiosulphate, will cause Heinz factor anaemia. In addition, as stated by Wendy Wallner, DVM, "Onions are only one of the

substances which can cause Heinz body anaemia. Other substances such as Acetaminophen (Tylenol) and benzocaine-containing topical preparations can also cause Heinz body anaemia in the dog." The latter probably accounts for many cases as it is prevalent in creams often recommended for allergy-suffering pets due to its ability to numb the itch. It is absorbed through the skin and builds up in the blood stream. This other substance is likely to have been involved in cases where garlic was suspect.



For centuries, as long as humans have been using herbs, garlic has been a primary remedy turned to in a majority of cases. For as long as people have been using garlic, they have also been feeding it to their animal companions. Its properties have proven far reaching, easy on the body and safe to use. In the past fifty years, during the rebirth of holistic medicine in the United States, garlic has been in the forefront. Every text that I have researched on herbal health which mentions pet care has

recommended it, especially for its incredible anti-parasitic and anti-septic properties.

In my own experience, garlic has also benefited pets with cancer, diabetes, liver, heart and kidney disease, uncontrollable staph infections and a host of other conditions, as well as being a staple in my recommended preventative protocols. It has been widely used by hundreds of thousands of pet owners with no reported negative side-effects - except its effect on their animal's breath - until now. This is the point; garlic has suddenly become a "suspect," not a proven culprit. Do not let mass hysteria determine a holistic care program for your dog or cat. Follow hundreds of years of "proven use" rather than recent "suspicions" in regards to this miracle herb; as garlic is known to be. As with anything, do use garlic in reasonable doses, and do know that you can trust history over hysteria.

Published with the kind permission of Dr Lisa S. Newman, N.D., Ph.D. (2007)

Since 1982, Dr. Newman has been a world renowned pioneer in the field of natural pet care.

Dr Newman has also assisted many owners of Wheatens with Addison's disease to manage their condition.

For this and other articles by Dr Newman, visit:

www.azmira.com

"There is no psychiatrist in the world like a puppy licking your face. "

Ben Williams

Happiness for a Wheaten is.....



.....MUD!!!!!!
'Scruff' Mather

"Dogs are miracles with paws."

**Attributed to Susan Ariel
Rainbow Kennedy**

Removal of Amazon Link from WHI Website Explained

Some of you may have noticed that our direct link to Amazon from the home page of our website has disappeared.

We thought we should explain why we have decided to forego the much appreciated extra funds it brought in when people used the link before purchasing from the Amazon site.

Amazon contacted us a little while ago, with changes to their terms and conditions.

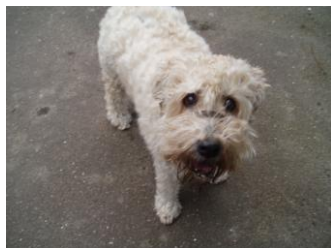
Reading their document carefully, we were able to deduce that it removed important restrictions which had limited Amazon's use of the WHI website visitors' information.

We felt that this was an unwarranted invasion of the privacy of our website users and for your protection, we have discontinued the link.

We now need to look to fund-raising by other means and would welcome any suggestions/offers which you might have. Please contact us at: wheatenhealth@aol.com.



Vestibular Syndrome – Annie's Story



A few weeks before Annie's 15th birthday. She had woken up, came down for her breakfast, been out in the garden to potty. Her day was normal, following me around from room to room, been out for her walk to the park, wolfing down her treats as the day went by, and finally enjoying her dinner. Then she settled down on the rug by my feet while I watched television in the lounge.

About an hour later I noticed that she started to rub her face on the rug, I thought she had an itch and didn't take much notice of it. It went on for a couple minutes or so. She then tried to get up, I noticed she was having trouble; I put it down to her old age (she never normally has any problems getting up). When she managed to get up, she kept stumbling around from side to side, each time she tried to take a step she would fall. With my help she managed to steady herself and then she tried to walk into the kitchen to have a drink. I watched her going around in circles, falling over, and not knowing where she was going. I honestly thought that she was having a fit of some sort and that I was going to lose her.

After a while I managed to calm her down, and we both lay back on the rug, she was in my arms while stroked her and kept telling her how much I love her. She was panting, and shaking while I was in tears.

I called the vet and explained all the symptoms, she asked me several questions... when she falls does she fall to the side? Or on her behind? When she walks does she walk like a drunk or in circles? Is her head tilted? Are her eyes flickering from side to side? Has she vomited? What has her day been like up until now? I answered all her questions. She told me it sounded very much like Vestibular Syndrome which is something that attacks elderly dogs for no apparent reason and it can come as quickly as it goes. She told me to keep an eye on her, and that she would recover within 48 hours. If she got worse then I was to call

back and take her in immediately.

Later that night we carried her upstairs to our bedroom, and she slept by side of our bed as she has since she was a puppy. When I woke up the following morning I crept downstairs as I didn't want to disturb her. Within 10 minutes I heard her come pounding down the stairs, into the kitchen, looking at me as if to say "Where's my breakfast?" and wagging her tail. I couldn't believe the transformation in her. I watched her wolf down her breakfast, then out into garden to potty. She was back to her normal self, running up and down the stairs, following me around, and jumping on and off sofas. It was like as if nothing had happened to her the night before!

About 4 weeks later, she had her second attack... I knew the symptoms immediately, the head tilted, the staggering, the eyes flickering. The second attack was much worse than the first one she had. I remembered the vet's words to me, "...within 48 hours she will recover", so that day and night I kept a close eye on her. The second day she had lost control of her bladder, wetting herself while asleep.. something she has never done before. That was stressing her out too. I would try and keep her clean and put plastic sheets in with her bedding. I would feed her out of my hand as the tilting of the head was worse than the first attack. She would have problems drinking out of her bowl due to head tilt.

We carried her up and down the stairs, we would carry her out into garden and spent our entire time giving her as much love and cuddles as we could and whispering sweet nothings into her ear.

By the fourth day we decided to take her to the vet's, by then she was showing signs of some improvements, she was eating and drinking, was able to go out to garden on her own, although still staggering but she was taking it easy so she wouldn't fall (the weather didn't help either as we had a lot of snow and ice). The drive to the vet's

was awful, I sat in the back of the car with her, she was stressing out a lot, panting and for some odd reason I actually thought she was going to die in my arms in the back of the car. I had never seen her so bad. I too was in a dreadful state.

The vet gave her a thorough examination, said she has a strong heartbeat, but is a little overweight, and has terrible teeth! Then went onto explain about Vestibular Syndrome and once again confirmed that it attacks elderly dogs.. most of them recover... some end up with a permanent tilt of the head, although he said that doesn't actually bother the dog as much as it bothers us!

I asked him if there was anything he could give her to make her feel any better, his reply was "She's not in pain, she's not suffering, she's eating and drinking and able to go outside to potty, there's nothing I can give her, just be patient and she will recover, if she doesn't recover then we will need to investigate further and do an MRI scan which at her age is not a good idea, quit worrying, there's plenty of life in the old girl yet!" He also mentioned that some dogs don't have any further attacks and some do.

I walked into the surgery into tears and I left the surgery in tears but this time, for joy! Even Annie seemed to have a new lease of life judging by the way she was pulling at the lead to get away from the surgery as fast as she could!

I had never heard of vestibular syndrome before, but if one of your babies ever gets it rest assured that they will recover.

It took her almost 2 weeks to get back to normal from the second attack. To look at her now you would never think that anything had happened to her. Back to running up and down the stairs, jumping on and off sofas, eating, drinking, running around in garden barking at neighbours, and enjoying her walks in the park.

The above was written back in March 2012. On the following page, Louise now updates Annie's story:



Annie's Story (Cont)

Since March Annie has had two more bouts of Vestibular Syndrome; the first of these was in June. It lasted about 2 weeks and was her most severe bout yet. When we took her to the vet, he told us to give her a few days but if there was no improvement then we would have to think about the "other option". I cared for her day and night and very slowly she recovered. She has had another bout recently but a mild case this time.

Vestibular Syndrome strikes very suddenly and with no warning; each time she has a bout I think to myself, "Is this the end? As I write this email to you she is still wobbly on her legs and has gone blind in one eye. The tilt of her head is more or less back to normal but she sometimes gets herself into a mess eating her food and tends to knock over the water bowl due to only being able to see out of one eye. Annie still manages to get out into the garden every day to plod around and do her toilet, but at night time while she sleeping she has lost bladder control. She is 15yrs 6 months, so each day she's with us is a blessing.

Annie's story shared by
Louise Hardy

We are extremely grateful to Louise for sharing Annie's story with us and giving us a real insight into this distressing condition together with the knowledge that the dog can recover and still go on to enjoy life.

As the previous editor of this newsletter, Barbie Penney, always used to say, "You're NEVER alone with a Wheaten, and you're NEVER on your own with a problem!" If you have a story to share or a concern about your Wheaten, we are always here to help.

WHI Auction Update

In May of this year Wheaten Health Initiative held another very successful, on-line auction which raised the very pleasing amount of £288.92 for our funds.

The star item was a unique, hand-crafted, Rag Rug of a Wheaten, made and donated to us by Pam Clarke.



This item went for a staggering £166!

But I am sure it was still small recompense for the hours and hours of work which went into making it. Thank you to all who donated items and to those who supported us with their bids.

WHI Makes Donation to PLN- Associated Variant Gene Research

The WHI Genetic Research Fund is held with the object of providing assistance to research organisations involved in this important area of work.

The Steering Group of WHI agreed that the PLN research project initiated by Drs Littman and Henthorn, should be the recipient of a donation from this Fund.

On 15 May 2012, a donation of approximately \$800 USD (£532.90, was transacted through the aid of SCWTCA

Endowment Inc., to Drs Meryl Littman and Paula Henthorn, of the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine in support of their recent research:

Genetic Testing for PLN-Associated Variant Genes.

This is the second such donation by WHI; In July 2004 - a donation of \$530 (£300 at the time) was sent to Dr Littman in America, for the 'Informative Families Study' which set out to investigate the diseases that affect our breed.

The 'Informative Families Study', together with other SCWTCA projects, provided the foundation for the current research investigating PLN-Associated Variant Genes.

Dr Littman's letter of thanks can be read on page5

pANCA Research Study

Reminders have been sent out to all the participants in the pANCA Longitudinal Study to update the information on their dogs.

Dr Allenspach and her team continue to monitor the dogs in the study.

This research is still of great importance, notwithstanding recent developments with the introduction of genetic screening tests for PLN-Associated Variant Genes.

It must be remembered that the new screening test focuses only on PLN at the present time, although further developments are hoped for in the future.

The pANCA project, however, may provide other important information, provided the status of the dogs in the study can be followed over an appropriate length of time by Dr Allenspach and her team.

If you have not yet completed your update, please do so.



Letter of Appreciation from Dr Littman



School of Veterinary Medicine
Department of Clinical Studies - Philadelphia
3900 Delancey Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
Tel 215.898.6678 Fax 215.573.8183

July 30, 2012

Malcolm Jeffries, Treasurer and Webmaster
Wheaten Health Initiative
246 Lockoford Lane
Chesterfield, Derbyshire
S41 0TQ, United Kingdom

Dear Malcolm,

Thank you for your donation to help fund our summer helpers that are working in Dr. Paula Henthorn's laboratory with the DNA samples from sick and healthy Wheatens. The cheek swabs are pouring in from all directions, and we are getting important prevalence data concerning the variant alleles that we found associated with PLN. So far this summer we are seeing that about $\frac{1}{2}$ of the samples are from dogs that are heterozygotes, that is, carrying 1 copy of the variant alleles that we found associated with PLN. About $\frac{1}{3}$ are from homozygous negative (normal) dogs, carrying no copies, and about $\frac{1}{6}$ of the samples are from dogs that are homozygous positive, carrying 2 copies of the variant alleles. It is this last group that are at highest risk for developing PLN themselves.

There are several helpful articles at www.scwtca.org/health/dnatest.htm, for instance, an abstract about the variant alleles we found associated with PLN, a step-by-step guide for getting cheek swabs, a submission form, and 37 questions and answers concerning how to interpret the test results. We are very happy that at last we can make available this DNA test that can be done on cheek swab samples and that the Wheaten community can identify individuals at highest risk for developing PLN as well as have a tool to carefully select mates for any dog, whether it is a carrier or not.

But of course there's much more work to do. After the prevalence study, we want to prospectively study the dogs whose test results are known so that we will know the real risk for dogs with 1 or 2 copies of the variant alleles. Retrospectively our data show that the dogs with 2 copies of the variant alleles are at highest risk, and the dogs with 1 copy are at intermediate risk, but it will be the prospective studies that help indicate whether the risk is 10, 20, 40, or 80 times higher, etc. We want to study if there are modifying protective genes in some dogs or environmental triggers that bring on disease. And we want to study the other genetic diseases in the breed, especially protein-losing enteropathy (PLE). Thank you so much for helping us toward these goals.

Please feel free to call upon me if you have any questions. The Wheaten community is amazingly supportive, and I'm glad that my career path just happened to lead me to you. Thanks again for all your support. Take care.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Meryl Littman".

Meryl P. Littman, VMD, DACVIM
Associate Professor of Medicine
Phone: 215-898-9288; FAX: 215-573-6050
email: merylitt@vet.upenn.edu

UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA



The SCWT Club of GB Seminar

Sunday 18th November 2012, Bulkington Village Hall, Bulkington, Bedworth, Warks., CV12 9JB.

We are delighted to publish details of this event in this edition of the WHI Newsletter.

Dr Paula Henthorn - Genetic Testing for PLN-associated variant genes

In 2003, three of the founding members of Wheaten Health Initiative; Barbara Penney, Maria Rigby and Sandra Jeffries attended the Keystone Health Conference held by the SCWT Club of America, where Dr Henthorn was one of the speakers.

Dr Henthorn made the difficult subject of Genetics as easy as possible to understand. She is an accomplished and interesting speaker and we encourage you to attend the seminar hosted by the SCWT Club of GB to hear her presentation at first-hand.

Dr. Henthorn (University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine) will discuss the research that has led to the identification of variant genes associated with PLN.

Dr Henthorn will also explain how an individual dog's test results can be used as one of the tools in making breeding decisions.

The seminar will also feature Trevor Cooper of Cooper and Co Solicitors, who will be talking about Doglaw for Dog Owners.

Mr Cooper has a reputation as an entertaining speaker and will offer essential advice for those occasions we all hope will never occur.

Autumn Seminar
Sunday 18th November 2012
 9.30 a.m. for 10.00 a.m.
 Bulkington Village Hall, Bulkington,
 Bedworth, Warks. CV12 9JB

Breakthrough in DNA Research for PLN
 with Dr Paula Henthorn,

She will discuss the research that has been involved with finding indicators for protein losing nephropathy, plus how to interpret and use an individual dog's test results in breeding decision-making and screening.

Dog Law for Dog Owners
 with Trevor Cooper

Well known as an entertaining speaker, Trevor also gives dog owners essential advice for those occasions we hope we will never have. Law as it relates to dogs is something we should all know much more about for our own and our dog's protection.

Booking essential
 Early bird price: £20.00
 After 20th October: £25.00
 Mixed buffet lunch: £5.00

For further seminar information and the Booking Form visit: <http://tinyurl.com/9hgt4g>

Celebrating Life

MEGAN – Eridanus Angel Eyes of Jacorose 1/2/98 - 6/2/2012

The best way to get a puppy is to beg for a baby brother - and they'll settle for a puppy every time.

Winston Pendelton



Readers of the Newsletter and visitors to our website will remember the inspiring story of Megan, who became ill shortly after Christmas 2003 and was diagnosed as having PLE (Protein-Losing Enteropathy) in February of the following year.

We were very sad to hear that Megan had passed away earlier this year.

However, that Megan lived to such a good age, in spite of her diagnosis, is a testament to the loving care and appropriate medical attention she received.

It also reminds us that the battle against such a disease does not have to end in defeat.

Here Suzi Jacobs gives us the final chapter to Megan's remarkable story.

Megan continued to be the loveable sweet dog that she always was right up to the grand age of 14 ! Despite losing her Human Daddy tragically some 3 years earlier and coping with the stress and change associated with that she remained a healthy and loveable friend.

She brought me much needed comfort during a very difficult time. In the last 2 years of her life she was loved and cared for by Dave and Stina Foxford who were with her everyday and I know she brought them as much joy as she did to me.

She was a very special dog and by careful diet maintenance, we were all blessed with her sweet, loving presence for a further 8 years from the onset of her illness.

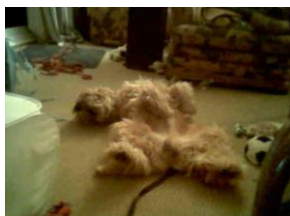
We all miss her greatly - our beautiful sweet Meggie RIP X





There is no faith which has never yet been broken, except that of a truly faithful dog.

Konrad Lorenz



Cancer in Dogs

Body cells are the basic building blocks of life. In complex body forms such as humans and dogs, each cell in the body is programmed to grow, divide and die in an orderly way. Cell division is responsible for the growth of our bodies and how old or damaged cells are replaced. The genetic material (DNA) in each cell controls this process.

However, DNA can be damaged or altered in a number of different ways ranging from radiation or chemical damage to natural mutation. When this occurs, normal cell growth and division is affected, cells do not die when they should and new cells are formed when the body does not need them.

This uncontrolled growth of cells forms a cancer or tumour in the affected part of the body. Some cancers do not form tumours, for example, leukaemia is a cancer of the bone marrow and blood.

A tumour is an overgrowth of cells and the word tumour is often used as a common term for cancer. However, not all tumours are cancerous.

If your dog develops a tumour, it will be described as benign or malignant. Benign tumours are not usually life threatening although this does not mean that they are entirely harmless. They can have a profound effect on the health of the dog when sited in an area where their growth causes space occupying problems.

For example, a tumour within the confines of the skull may cause considerable problems with brain function if the tumour compresses the surrounding brain tissue, whereas a lipoma, a fatty mass common in dogs, and seen mainly within the fat underlying the skin, may be unsightly but

rarely causes ill health.

Cells in benign tumours do not spread to other areas of the body.

There are more than 100 different types of cancers, all sharing basic similarities. The definition of a cancer cell is; first, the genetic mutation which results in abnormal cell behaviour and second, the capacity for uncontrolled growth and spread into other areas of the body.

The opportunity for cells to mutate is much more likely where there is a rapid turnover of cells. Some of the most serious forms of cancer occur where cells divide frequently.

White blood cells, skin, bone, lining of the bowel and airways are all examples of tissue where cell division is frequent and cancers affecting these areas of the body such as melanoma, carcinomas and mast cell tumours are all high on the list of cancers found in dogs.

Cancers are usually named for the cell or organ in which they originate and can be grouped into broad categories, the main ones being:

- ♦ **Carcinoma** – cancer that begins in skin or the tissues that line or cover internal organs
- ♦ **Sarcoma** – cancer that begins in bone, cartilage, fat, muscle, blood vessels or other connective or supportive tissue
- ♦ **Leukaemia** – cancer that begins in blood forming tissue such as bone marrow causing the production of large numbers of abnormal blood cells
- ♦ **Lymphoma and myeloma** – cancers originating in the immune system
- ♦ **Central nervous system cancers** – cancers of the brain and spinal cord.

Some cancers are sex linked; mammary tumours being found in bitches and testicular tumours in dogs.

Some are breed related; osteosarcoma* (a bone cancer) is found in several large breeds and is probably related to the rapid growth of bone in these large dogs.

(*See related item in "The Pros and Cons of Neutering" article later in this newsletter)

Often the life threatening effect of a cancer is not from the original site of the mutated cell but rather from the site of the secondary tumours.

Mutated cells breaking away from the original site and migrating to other parts of the body is called metastatic spread and the resulting metastases form numerous new centres of tumour growth.

The seriousness of these secondary tumours depends upon the part of the body in which they form. If tumours grow in the liver or lung, they can replace normal tissue to such an extent that the function of the organ and its ability to support life is significantly affected, causing the death of the animal.

So we know that cancers share basic similarities but they can also show a wide variety of symptoms and illnesses depending on the type of cell involved.

A feature of osteosarcoma or cancer of the bone is the way in which the abnormal cancer cells rapidly migrate away from the original site.

Metastatic spread is likely to have caused secondary tumours in other areas of the body by the time a swelling on the bone is noticed or detected by x-rays.



Cancer in Dogs (Cont)

This makes it a challenging cancer to treat, as amputation of the affected part is only of short term benefit if the resulting metastases form in any of the vital organs of the dog's body.

Skin cell cancers such as mast cell tumours and fibrosarcoma pose different sets of problems. Mast cell tumours are one of the most common cancers in dogs and surgery is often used as a first option in treatment.

However, surgery often creates problems of its own; it is often difficult to remove all of the malignant cells because they tend to extend well into the area which looks visually normal. The amount of tissue which needs to be removed to prevent the return of the tumour, often leaves a large wound which is very difficult to repair and may cause the dog major difficulties.

When a dog is diagnosed with cancer, the treatment options are the same as for humans; surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Most veterinary practices will not have the sophisticated

equipment required to deliver these treatments and your dog will probably be referred to a specialist centre such as the Animal Health Trust in Suffolk where they can benefit from advanced surgical techniques and treatments.

Many of the agents which cause genetic damage or mutation in cells are already well documented in human cancer research. The effects of tobacco smoke, certain chemicals, exposure to radiation and infection by viruses are all proven causes of cancer and pose the same threats to our dogs.

Continuing research into cancers and their causes, which affect our dogs, is being undertaken by scientists, geneticists and researchers at the Animal Health Trust.

This research will be helped enormously when H.R.H. The Princess Royal opens the Trust's new Cancer Centre in November this year.

The new facility will be called The Kennel Club Cancer Centre after Members of the Kennel Club gave a £1.5 million

interest-free loan to the AHT to enable the building of the centre to go ahead.

Dr. Peter Webbon, Chief Executive of the AHT said,

"Cancer remains one of the biggest threats to the wellbeing of our dogs, but we hope that through the new Kennel Club Cancer Centre at the AHT, we will be able to take major strides towards improving the health and welfare of not just dogs but other animals too."

KATE WATKINS

References:

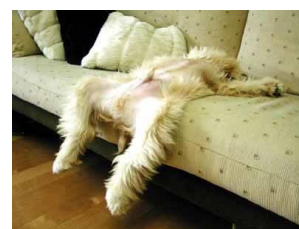
Steve Dean,
Dog World, 15th, 22nd, 29th Dec 2011
www.animalcancertrust.org.uk
www.cancer.gov

Editor's note:

"The Dog Cancer Survival Guide: Full Spectrum Treatments to Optimize Your Dog's Life Quality and Longevity"

by Dr Demian Dressler DVM was recommended at a recent seminar I attended, together with "Apocaps", a supplement developed by Dr Dressler to 'enhance the ability of cancerous cells to self-destruct rather than to proliferate'.

If anyone has used the book or the treatment for their dog and would like to give us their opinion, we would love to hear from you.



If a dog will not come to you after having looked you in the face, you should go home and examine your conscience.

Woodrow Wilson

And It's Thanks To Our Caterers

All who attend our seminars constantly remark on the wonderful catering provided by John and Pam Clarke. Not only is the food they provide absolutely delicious but the amazing balancing act they manage to achieve, in keeping to our tight budget and never letting the quality (or quantity) of the food suffer as a result, is nothing less than awe-inspiring!

We greatly appreciate all the support we receive from Pam and John (see earlier in the Newsletter for the Rag Rug that Pam made for us to auction!

However, their unstinting efforts in providing hot food for so many at our last seminar, within a strict time-scale were miraculous. Once again they

sacrificed their own chance to sit back and listen to the speakers in order to feed us all.

We really appreciate all the support we receive and felt that their efforts were worthy of more than our usual, "Thank-you" in recognition.

We therefore arranged a little surprise for them and Lisa Mullins of Braemuelin Soft-Coated Wheaten Photography, was duly booked for a photo shoot of Pam and John's much-loved Wheatens, Buzz and Pheonix.

Lisa did a stunning job (she is used to Wheatens after all and has plenty of patience in capturing that perfect shot!)

Pam and John were able to choose from a wide selection of wonderful natural photographs.

Lisa, Pam and John have kindly allowed us to use some of their favourites here.



www.braemuelinsoftcoatedwheatensphotography.moonfruit.com



Celebrating Life

Ch Frontline Silver Darling at Sanzerena (Tara) 16.03.96 –17.01.12



Albumin Levels - Did you know?

During the pANCA project, owners were given the albumin levels in their dog's test result, as well as the pANCA reading; this is because the level of albumin can give important information regarding the dog's state of health.

In a healthy dog, for example, if the normal range for albumin were given as between 22-35, significantly lower levels might indicate all is not well and below 10 would be considered 'life-threatening'.

For further information please visit our website:
www.wheatenhealthinitiative.com

and use the 'Search' box on the home page.

Also:

http://www.marvistavet.com/html/body_glomerulonephritis.html



I have previously written a number of articles* for the WHI Newsletters about Tara.

Sadly, we recently had to say goodbye to Tara at the age of 15 years 10 months. Therefore this article is the completion of her health story.

Tara managed really well in the last year of her life, she had only been to the Vets a few times (refer updated Health Tracker™ (Appendix).

During 2011, she had become anaemic; the pathologist felt this was due to her geriatric kidney failure, and treatment was not required at this stage. In April, I had been grooming her and decided to pluck her ears, naturally she shook her head a few times and suddenly she had a seizure, she lost bladder and bowel control but she recovered quickly and appeared to have no long term ill effects.

During the evening of 30 July she suddenly started vomiting, she dehydrated and became lethargic very quickly, so we took her to the Emergency Vets (unfortunately, our Vet does not do 24 hour cover).

I took along a copy of her Health Tracker™. The Emergency Vet thought that either her kidneys were in crisis, or she had a tummy bug and recommended a blood test.

The blood results showed her kidneys were ok, therefore the Vet said she would treat her for a tummy bug and keep her in overnight on an IV drip, as she needed fluids and anti-sickness treatment.

We told the Vet we were worried about leaving her due to her age, in case we lost her, and we would want to be with her at the end. The Vet reassured us that the staff would phone if they became worried about her condition, and we could go in to be with her.

The Vet also told us we could call them at any time, day or night, if we wanted to check how she was doing.

We rang at about 6.30am and they told us she had responded well to the treatment and we could pick her up about 11am when the IV fluids would be complete. When we got to the surgery the new Vet on duty could not get over how strong and in what good condition she was in for her age.

The Vet said she had been a 'perfect patient' and that Tara was very calm and had lay quietly in her crate and let them do anything and had been no bother.

She said she had read her Health Tracker™ and could we tell her all about our breed, as she had not had any contact with Wheatens. She said we had made the right decision to have the treatment because Tara still had life in her yet and was not ready to give up!



Tara continued well through the rest of the year but in early December, we noticed she started to sleep a lot with her bottom raised in the air, it was an odd position but she seemed comfortable. We did wonder if it was to do with her anaemia and instinct telling her to get the blood to her brain and/or organs – who knows?

Early in 2012, we noticed a

change, she slept even more, had less interest in her surroundings, and was slower on her walks, some days she was happy just to walk on her lead, around the front garden. However, in true Tara fashion - she never missed a meal! On the evening of 11 January, she suddenly started to shiver so we covered her with a blanket. She moaned, and kept closing her eyes tight and was clearly uncomfortable, we took her out to relieve herself then she settled better.

By the next day she was much slower, but ate well, and acted 'normal'. In the evening as we got up to go to bed, she jumped off the sofa and had a very bad seizure.

She lost control of her bladder and bowel and her body went very cold in a matter of seconds so we covered her with a blanket. Tara's eyes were in the top of her head and she was clearly unconscious.

Her pulse and breathing were erratic and we waited with her, thinking she would not recover this time, but after 40 minutes, much to our surprise, she suddenly opened her eyes, coughed and stretched, then got up! She slept in our room from then on....

As the days progressed it became clear she was tired and the dreaded decision needed to be made.

Celebrating Life - Tara (Cont)

On 17 January, she jumped off the sofa and again had a seizure; this time she was awake throughout but clearly she could not move, she lost bladder control, and went very cold.

We lifted her onto the sofa and covered her, but after 10 minutes she recovered and then wanted her dinner! She lay sleeping and we chatted to our Vet Emma.

We took her down at the end of surgery that day and Emma discovered she had little blood pressure and thought Tara may possibly have a growth in her brain which could be the cause of the seizures, so we said goodbye to her.....

Tara was a strong character, sound in body and mind, food was very important to her and if she could leap off anything she did, even into her grand age.

We tried to lift her but she was often too quick especially if she heard the biscuit tin rattling or visitors arrived!

We were very lucky she had a good and long life - we miss her every day.....

Prior to writing this article Malcolm decided to average out Tara's USG results, these proved very interesting because at the beginning of her kidney failure in March 2009, her USG reading was 1.030.

Also at this time, she was put onto the recommended kidney food, Hills k/d diet (canned), which caused her to have dreadful diarrhoea. We later discovered this food was sprayed with hydrolysed chicken fat and Tara was allergic to chicken!

As her condition worsened, her USG started to drop, the notes on her Health Tracker show how, in 2009, she was so very ill.

However, from August onwards, she went back to having Burns food plus the mix of hypoallergenic mixer, to reduce phosphate and protein levels. Not only did Tara's general health improve dramatically, but her USG rose and stayed steady for the next 3 years!

We hope her story and her Health Tracker show that 'tracking' results and identifying

problems early, can not only result in a better quality of life but also a longer and happier one.

Sandra Jeffries



* Newsletter 18 Sept 2009
Managing Incontinence in the Elderly Dog.

* Newsletter 20 Jan 2011
Geriatric Renal Failure, Food Allergies and health monitoring with the Health Tracker™.

Urine Specific Gravity

For a simple explanation of USG and the urine tests your dog may be given by your vet, visit:

<http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?c=0+1302+1473&aid=3136>

WHI Tenth Anniversary Event 2013 12th May!



We intend to celebrate our 10th Anniversary next year in style. We are in the process of finalizing our plans, so no details as yet - but we promise it will be something not to miss!



Watch out for further details on the website and in future newsletters and come and celebrate with us!





"He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of his heart. You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion."

Unknown



Luxating Patella

Patella luxation as a condition which is most commonly seen in toy breeds but it is thought that it may be increasing in incidence is some of the larger breeds of dog.

The first signs that something is wrong usually occur when the dog is around six months of age, although in severe cases it can happen earlier.

Most owners first notice that their dog skips now and then when he is running. He doesn't appear to suffer any pain and after a few steps is back to normal.

Some owners notice an audible click or popping noise when the dog is moving about. In other cases, he may suddenly cry out or yip and then hold one back leg up for a few steps before putting it back down again.

If you notice this happening to your dog, it is important to get veterinary advice because if it is a luxating patella, left untreated, the dog may eventually develop a painful arthritis in the affected leg.

During movement the patella (knee-cap) slides up and down in the trochlear groove at the end of the femur (thigh-bone).

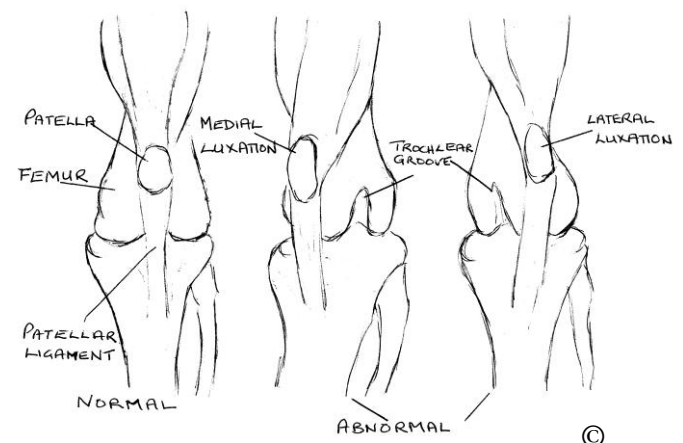
The surface of this groove and the contact area of the patella are part of the stifle joint and all are lined with cartilage and lubricated with joint fluid to ensure smooth action.

The groove helps to keep the patella in the right place and it is held in position by two strong ligaments; one attached to the large thigh muscles and the other to the tibia or shin bone.

When the patella luxates, it slips out of its groove. In the majority of cases it slips out of its place to the inside of the knee joint (medial patella luxation) but can also slip to the outside (lateral).

There are three main reasons for the patella dislocating:

- * Weak or stretched ligaments allow the patella to move out of position.
- * The trochlear groove is too shallow to hold the patella in place.
- * The ligament which attaches the patella to the shin bone or tibia is attached too far to the inside of the tibia pulling the patella out of alignment.



Diagnosis is made through palpation of the knee, to see if it slips inside the joint more than would be expected but even that may not be indicative of a truly luxating patella and x-rays may be needed.

Even when the diagnosis is made, there may be no symptoms or only intermittent ones, such as the skipping or hopping gait.

Where both hind limbs are affected the dog may classically 'bunny-hop' when both limbs are affected at the same time.

There are four diagnostic grades of patellar luxation. Essentially, these are:

- * Grade 1 – The kneecap can be moved out of place manually but will fall back into its natural position once the manipulator lets go.
- * Grade 2 – Same as the

above except that the kneecap does not move back to its normal position when the manipulator lets go.

- * Grade 3 – The patella is out of place all the time but can be manipulated back into its normal position manually (though it will not stay there).

- * Grade 4 – The patella is not only out of place all the time but cannot even be manipulated back into place by hand.

A dog with Grade 4 luxation has extreme difficulty extending his knees and walks with them bent, virtually all the time.

Grade 1 does not require surgery.

Grade 2 may benefit from surgery, depending on how bad the lameness is. Grades 3 and 4 require surgery

If your vet diagnoses even a mild Grade 1, there is much you can do to help your dog.

Keeping a healthy body weight with lots of lean

Luxating Patella (Cont)

muscle will support all his joints; strong muscles above and below the knee will form a protective cage which will help to keep the patella in place and prevent further damage.

Appropriate* exercise is vital to achieve this, keeping your dog active will build muscles which will reduce the clinical symptoms of luxating patella.

Feed a high quality diet with added supplements to aid joint health.

Chiropractic treatment can help to keep the knees and hips in good alignment, this will reduce clinical symptoms.

Most cases of patella luxation are ^ocongenital, i.e. present at birth, although cases can occur as a result of injury to the stifle joint, resulting in patella dislocation.

Steve Dean in "Breeding Away from Patella Luxation"¹, says, "The current view is that there is not one single cause but a general poor alignment of the hind-limb as a whole, that leads to this disability occurring." He goes on to suggest that, "... the incidence will be reduced where breeders select breeding stock from those lines that produce the least number of affected dogs."

Mr Dean also observes that the problem is not limited to pedigree dogs and that the classic farm bred terrier is just as likely to have this disorder.

In considering Pedigree breeds he says, "Of the larger breeds that suffer similar problems, a lack of stifle angulation would appear to be associated with an increased frequency of patella luxation." Mr Dean concludes that any dog needing surgery should not be bred from.

It is suggested that high incidence within a breed may indicate genetic origins but that the mode of inheritance is unclear.

Some experts suggest that multiple genes may be involved and environmental factors such as a correct diet and appropriate exercise for young puppies may also be a factor in the development of luxating patella.

It is likely that many apparently normal animals are carriers of genes that may contribute to the condition. There is currently no way of detecting these animals.

* Seek appropriate advice with regard to a suitable exercise programme, particularly in the case of puppies and young dogs.

^o **A congenital disorder, or congenital disease**, is a condition existing at birth and often before birth.

A congenital disorder is not always the result of genetic abnormalities, it may also occur as a result of the environment in the uterus, cell development, infection or a chromosomal abnormality.

The outcome of the disorder will depend on complex interactions between the pre-existing condition and environmental influences after birth.

Lynn Carter

Sources and Further Reading:

Dog World, "A Vet's View", Mar 16th 2012, Steve Dean

<http://www.ufaw.org.uk/PATELLARLUXATIONLABRADORRETRIEVER.php>

LaFond *et al* 2002
Shell 2007

www.vetspecialists.co.uk/factsheets/Orthopaedics/Patellar_Luxation.html

www.willows.uk.net



Seasonal Canine Illness

The AHT Newsletter for July 2012 appeals once again for help from owners in their ongoing research into a mysterious illness which has claimed the lives of a number of dogs.

As we have previously reported in the WHI Newsletter, the illness is referred to as 'seasonal' because outbreaks have previously occurred during the autumn of 2009, 2010 and 2011.

Suspected cases have now been reported in 2012 and the AHT has urged dog owners to remain vigilant.

SCI becomes evident usually within 24 to 72 hours of dogs walking in woodland, and the main signs are **vomiting, diarrhoea** and **lethargy**, although the AHT Website includes details of many other recorded symptoms.

The AHT recommends that any dog owners seeing these signs after walking their dogs in woodland should immediately seek advice from their vet.

The following locations are of particular interest to the AHT:

- Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire
- Rendlesham Forest, Suffolk
- Sandringham Estate, Norfolk
- Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire
- Thetford Forest, Norfolk

our following study sites complete their online questionnaire, **whether or not their dog has displayed signs of SCI**.

Dr. Richard Newton, of the AHT said: "We desperately need information from dogs who have been walked at any of our study sites, even if they did not become ill.

The information we can glean from owners of dogs who walked at the sites and their dogs didn't show clinical signs of SCI is just as important to our investigation as information from affected dogs."

"Although these are five previously-affected study sites, we want to highlight that dogs could be at risk of the illness when walking in any UK woodland during the autumn. Therefore, we advise *all* dog owners to remain vigilant for signs of SCI."

For further information about SCI and investigation into the illness, please visit:
http://www.aht.org.uk/cms-display/sci_dogs.html

*"Thorns may hurt you,
men desert you,
sunlight turn to fog;
but you're never
friendless ever,
if you have a dog."*

Douglas Mallock

The AHT ask that dog owners who have walked their dogs in



Now



"I can't think of anything that brings me closer to tears than when my old dog -- completely exhausted after a hard day in the field -- limps away from her nice spot in front of the fire and comes over to where I'm sitting and puts her head in my lap, a paw over my knee, and closes her eyes and goes back to sleep. I don't know what I've done to deserve that kind of friend."

Gene Hill



Celebrating Life - The Golden Oldies

A look at life with a geriatric dog.

As I write this I am blessed with the continuing company of our old girl, Jasmine, now knocking on 15 years and 9 months. Her presence is a daily blessing but each day brings new challenges and problems to solve and I thought some of the solutions we have found might be of use to others.

Increasing arthritis was affecting Jasmine badly in the early part of this year and the vet prescribed Previcox which is working wonderfully for her. However, Jasmine has developed a tendency to emulate Bambi on ice!



As downstairs is mainly hard flooring, rather than carpet, this needed urgent attention!

Initially we tried purpose-made dog socks from the internet, which had gripper pads on the bottom to aid her when walking. These were partially successful but expensive!

Getting them to stay on her feet required them to be close fitting and getting Jasmine to cooperate in putting them on was quite another matter!

In the end we found baby socks on the same principle from Tesco, were just as effective (and cheaper and easier to put on, too).

As her difficulties progressed we dispensed with the socks altogether, finding that small rugs (from Poundland) on the floor, were more effective and if she has a toileting accident it is easy to pick the rug up and clean it.

When Jasmine came on a caravan holiday with us to Wales in August, we had anticipated that having grass

underfoot would be fine for her but the wet weather put paid to that idea.

The plastic groundsheet in the awning became as slippery as an ice-rink. Our resourceful daughter found the ideal solution; she took along a roll of old carpet underlay, the kind that has a rubberised cushioning on the underside.

When this was laid upside down in the awning, Jasmine had an instant, insulated, soft surface to walk on, with excellent grip. What is more – any toilet mishaps were quickly dealt with by cutting off the offending area and replacing it with another piece!

We have found, as Jasmine's sight and hearing has deteriorated, that restricting the areas she uses around the house and garden through the use of temporary fencing and puppy panels, has enabled her to get around under her own steam and maintain some independence.

It also means that when we are not there, she cannot be inadvertently knocked off her feet by one of the other dogs.

We are delighted that Jasmine continues to place food high on her list of priorities. So much so that any hand waved around in the vicinity of her head is presumed to have food in it!

One day this week, Jasmine managed in the space of about 5 minutes to get around the back of one of the settees (past the table we had placed there as a barrier) and then finding she could not turn around and as she can no longer 'back-up', she carried on through the second coffee table placed as a barrier at the other end.

She came to a halt with her head and one front leg stuck between two table legs and the other front leg protruding from between the other two table legs; more or less wearing the coffee table as a helmet!

and Then



When Ian leaped to the rescue to disentangle her, she was far more interested in investigating whether he had food in his hand than getting the coffee table off. We decided about 6 months ago that we were going to have to take raw chicken wings off Jasmine's menu. This was not because of a lack of teeth but rather the fact that the strength in her jaw was not as it had been and I worried that she might not be able to process them through her system as well.

Our vet is still trying to persuade me to change her diet to, "A nice complete dry senior food." and I have told her I will – just as soon as Jasmine asks for it!

She remains a raw fed dog, as she has been since the age of 8 months. It is that and the lack of vaccination for the last 15 years, which I believe has contributed to her reaching this wonderful age, and this in spite of contracting leptospirosis at around the age of seven.

Apart from one, the whole litter she came from lived good, long lives and her sister, Tilly, only died a few months ago.



Jasmine in party mood!

Celebrating Life - The Golden Oldies (Cont)

Jasmine's toilet accidents are more to do with her not signalling to us in time that she needs to go out, rather than lack of control but the use of the dog nappies recommended in previous newsletters (www.petwetting.co.uk) have definitely lessened the stress on us and her, particularly at night.

We tend to use pads made by Tena with the nappy pants, rather than ordering the ones made specifically by the nappy company. We find them just as good, comparable as far as cost is concerned and more readily available.

Under her bedding we use "Drynites" bed sheets made by Huggies. All the major superstores seem to place them regularly on a 'special price' deal, so I stock up on them then.

They are plastic-backed disposable sheets to go under cot sheets and they soak up any 'accidents'. We have found a baby monitor invaluable at night. We had tried Jasmine upstairs in our bedroom when she started to need more care but she wasn't used to it and neither were we and none of us was getting any sleep.

The baby monitor means we can keep a check on her and respond quickly if there is a problem. She seems to have settled now into a routine and we are usually woken at around 2 to 3 o'clock when she needs to go out and then again between 6 and 7.

The disturbance is a small price to pay for such a wonderful girl, to whom we owe so much.

She was a wonderful mother



And my best friend

I know the day is drawing nearer when we will have to say our goodbyes but I am hoping fervently that Jasmine will make that decision for herself.

Whilst she remains comfortable and gets enjoyment from being here, we will do whatever is needed.

I am so very grateful for all her years of fun and love and when the time does come, though she may no longer be here, I will only have to look at my other wonderful dogs and know that her legacy to us continues.

Lynn Carter



"A person can learn a lot from a dog, even a loopy one like ours. Marley taught me about living each day with unbridled exuberance and joy, about seizing the moment and following your heart. He taught me to appreciate the simple things-a walk in the woods, a fresh snowfall, a nap in a shaft of winter sunlight. And as he grew old and achy, he taught me about optimism in the face of adversity. Mostly, he taught me about friendship and selflessness and, above all else, unwavering loyalty."

**John Grogan,
Marley and Me**

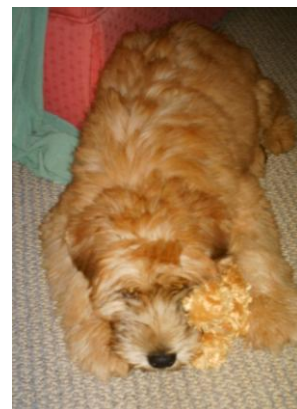
Parvo Outbreak in Kent

Trevor Munro of the Faversham Veterinary Clinic warned people living in the Faversham area of a serious outbreak of Parvovirus.

Parvovirus is a highly contagious condition which causes vomiting and dysentery, and can lead to heart failure and death within 30 hours.

Mr Munro, of Faversham Veterinary Clinic, is reported as saying he has seen six confirmed cases of canine parvovirus, and suspects a further 20 dogs have the infection.

Four of the six confirmed cases had died, at the time of the report in the local newspaper.



Do you know a Wheaten Hero?

In Dog World of the 26th September, it was reported that a 23 year old autistic man was carrying out a sponsored walk to raise money for the charity that trained and provided an assistance dog for him. Considering that the gentleman in question, Samuel Poulton, once found it extremely difficult to even leave his house, it is apparent that his assistance dog, Jade, a Labrador has made an immeasurable difference to his life in the four years since they were put together by the group, 'Canine Partners'. Mr Poulton's efforts have so far raised £1,100 for the charity.

A spokesperson for Canine Partners explained, "Samuel's world is very constrained by his inability to cope outside the home; he can't filter out noises around him and so when he leaves the home his world turns into chaos. On top of this, autism is not visible and so people often do not understand why Samuel may act in a certain way. However, when Jade is with him life is easier for him. She gives him focus to concentrate on and acts as an outward sign to others that Samuel has a disability. People respond to this by giving him space and are a little more understanding if his response to a situation may seem a little different."

Now this inspiring story set me thinking; the dog making such a difference to Mr Poulton's life may be of the breed one would expect to fulfill this kind of role, i.e. a Labrador but we all know that there are Wheatens out there providing all kinds of support for people with special needs of one kind or another. I would love to feature some of these in our next newsletter. If you have bred or owned a Wheaten carrying out a supportive role, such as a PAT dog, assistance dog etc. Do please get in touch by e-mail or by phone and tell me your dog's story. We all know our breed does not rely solely on good looks or playing the clown but has intelligence to match the best. Contact me at chloeanco2000@yahoo.co.uk or Tel: 01793 765253.

Lynn Carter

A dog's wet nose is not strictly speaking the worst of the bunch, but it has its own peculiar dreadfulness which connoisseurs of the ghastly and dog owners everywhere have come to know and dread. It's like having a small piece of defrosting liver pressed lovingly against you."

Terry Pratchett



To Neuter or Not – That is the Question!



Neutering is a general term used for the surgical removal of the reproductive organs in both male and female dogs. Castration is the specific term for the removal of the testicles of the male dog, whilst spaying is the removal of the ovaries and uterus of the female dog.

The routine neutering of dogs is a relatively recent development, dating from the late 1940's when the advent of safer anaesthetics made such surgeries possible. In urban areas, there were concerns about the growing number of pet animals available which far exceeded the number of potential new owners and sterilisation was seen as a quick solution to the problem.

As time went on the perception was that neutering was better for the animals and for the convenience of the owners and it became almost a 'civic duty' that domestic dogs and cats should be sterilised. Many Rescue Agencies began to neuter all animals before they were put forward for rehoming. One vet working in such a programme during the 1980's has undergone a change of heart since that time and says,

"I have been surgically altering dogs and cats for many years. Over the years, my thoughts on this subject have changed. During most of my career, it was a given that all pets should be neutered. We accepted that without question. Most veterinarians still do.

But with time, I began to realize that many of the reasons given for this surgery were not based on science or the long-term welfare of our individual pets. Years of observing pets in my practice led me realize that many of the problems I was treating could be traced back to the pets being surgically

neutered or neutered too young." Ron Hines DVM PhD¹

Neutering of animals removes the sex hormones Progesterone, Oestrogen and Testosterone, which both males and females produce in varying quantities, the individual quantity of each one determining the sex of the dog. Hormones, produced in the bodies of all mammals, work in harmony, carrying messages to cells and regulating body systems; they are responsible for eventual physical, psychological and social maturity. If neutering is carried out too early, the animal will never reach full adult maturity and problems, both physical and mental, could be the result.

The sex hormones are responsible for far more than just sexual behaviour; Progesterone is involved in blood clotting, regulation of the thyroid gland and the reduction of inflammation and swelling. Low progesterone levels can affect the body's ability to produce new bone cells.

Oestrogen receptors are found in many parts of the body, including the brain and central nervous system and are important to mood and well-being.

Testosterone, the major sex hormone in male dogs is secreted by the testicles; it is involved in bone health as well as sexual behaviour. It is also present in females, in very much smaller amounts, and is secreted by the ovaries.

According to 'The Dog's Trust' website, "It's Nicer To Neuter"² and there are lots of reasons given in favour of doing so, such as, "behavioural, medical and financial" benefits but is this really the case? Is there compelling scientific research to back up these assertions or is the situation much less clear? In this article we will look at

some of the evidence for and against neutering.

The benefits claimed by some animal welfare groups and by many veterinary surgeons will be examined and assessed in the light of current, related scientific research. The lack of sound scientific research means that many of the traditionally accepted beliefs about neutering may be not based on sound evidence.

Spaying is said to be financially beneficial by preventing the costs involved in unplanned pregnancies and raising puppies; undoubtedly, there is some truth to this. For the owners of the bitch there may be the cost of veterinary intervention if the pregnancy is to be avoided. If the owners continue with the pregnancy there will be associated costs, particularly if the bitch is to receive appropriate feeding and possibly veterinary treatment both during the pregnancy and at the time of the birth.

Raising a litter properly is a huge commitment, requiring many man-hours in care. There is also the need for appropriate facilities and equipment and the best of feeding and medical attention; all of this comes at a cost, which may well not be met by the sale of puppies.

If homes cannot be found for the puppies, then the owner will face the financial burden of their continued care. The wider costs incurred through the production of unplanned litters of puppies are often born by others, for example, the costs related to the employment of people in the management of stray dogs, abandoned puppies etc. fall on the tax payer. Even charities involved in dealing with the care of unwanted dogs in rescue centres have to rely on the generosity of the general public for their running costs.



To Neuter or Not – That is the Question! (Cont)

The financial argument may be compelling but is spaying the bitch the only solution to the prevention of unwanted pregnancy? Could not appropriate care for bitch at the time of her seasons also prevent unwanted pregnancies and remove the financial cost of spaying, as well as any associated veterinary problems she might have as a result of the operation?

Does the evidence exist that proves that sterilisation is reducing the problem of unwanted animals? It would appear that it probably doesn't; after twenty years of early neutering in the USA, the number of unwanted dogs is still increasing, New (2006)³. The same study quotes that 56% of litters born were unwanted and that 20% of dogs in rescue centres were under the age of one and were there because of unwanted behaviour, such as barking and boisterous behaviour.

In contrast the Scandinavian countries do not have a robust early neutering policy and yet do not appear to have the same issues with regard to unwanted animals. *"There are some countries in the world that don't bother to neuter animals at all and they don't have any more problems with overpopulation than we do."* Dr Kersti Seksel⁴ BVSc(Hons), MRCVS, MA(Hons), FACVSc(Animal Behaviour), Diplomate ACVB, CMAVA, Dip ECVBM-CA

Prof Steve Dean writes in Dog World 4/07/12, *"Today, if the statistics are accurate (Ref: Number of cats and dogs in UK welfare organisations, Veterinary Record: Vol 170, 19), around two per cent of all dogs pass through a welfare organisation's hands each year. Although a tenth of this number would still be disappointing for the cost for the dog charities is significant, this does not suggest a massive stray dog*

problem. In fact reports from the major charities suggest a major problem arises from those who have 'status dogs', Greyhounds and lurchers rather than the pedigree dog community. In welfare terms, the over production of dogs does not sound like a problem of accidental pregnancies but something much more deliberate."

Some of the traditional arguments in favour of neutering relate to preventing unwanted behaviour, for example:

The dog exhibits calmer, more predictable behaviour making it a more suitable family pet.

There is a reduction in aggressive and unwanted sexual behaviour, preventing fighting, mounting and destructiveness.

Dogs that are neutered are less likely to mark territory or stray. There is a reduction in moody behaviour in bitches around the time of their season.

Male dogs are prevented from desperately attempting to escape from the home to seek out a bitch in season.

At the BSAVA Congress 2012, Dr Seksel⁵ said that whilst there was not a great deal of scientific evidence on the subject, there were studies suggesting that neutered dogs were actually more active than their intact peers and that the main reason for surrendering a neutered pet dog to a rescue organisation was "boisterousness"!

Farhoody and Zink⁶ (2010) produced a question survey which was used to collect behavioural information on 10,839 dogs. Behavioural characteristics of intact male and female dogs were compared with those of four groups of neutered dogs: those neutered at or before 6 months, between 7 and 12 months, between 13 and 18 months, and after 18 months.

"The resulting data showed that the behaviour of neutered dogs was significantly different from that of intact dogs in ways that contradict the prevailing view [that neutering affected behaviour in a beneficial way]. Among the findings, neutered dogs were more aggressive, fearful, excitable, and less trainable than intact dogs." This study was peer-reviewed as "reliable and valid".

We know that testosterone and progesterone play a role in giving dogs a feeling of calm, confident, well-being. If a dog is being neutered because of fear-related aggression, the reduction in the calming effect of the sex hormones may actually increase the problem.

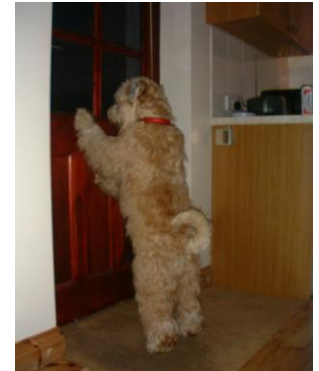
Often those in favour of neutering will cite resulting health benefits for the animal, however, the risks associated with the neutering procedure itself also have to be taken into account. According to Sanborn⁹, at one veterinary teaching hospital, intra-operative complications arose in 6.3% of cases and complications arising post-operatively occurred in 14.1% of cases; a not inconsiderable number.

Neutering at the wrong time in your dog's life can cause as many problems as it solves. Most vets will neuter an animal any time after about 5 months of age and some are prepared to do so as early as 6 weeks! A bitch should be spayed mid-way between seasons when her hormones are least active. However, there is significant, scientific evidence that early neutering, before the dog has reached maturity, can have a detrimental effect on its future health and well-being.

For vets, there is a preference for early neutering for some sound technical reasons; the reproductive tract of juvenile pets is less vascular and therefore excessive bleeding during and after surgery is less

"There's facts about dogs, and then there's opinions about them. The dogs have the facts, and the humans have the opinions. If you want the facts about the dog, always get them straight from the dog. If you want opinions, get them from humans."

J. Allen Boone





"If you want the best seat in the house ... move the dog"

Unknown



To Neuter or Not – That is the Question! (Cont)

likely. In younger pets, no internal sutures are needed at all and the healing process is also more rapid; within 5 days of surgery, a spay incision is hardly noticeable.

Neutering pets whilst young avoids the complication of females being brought in to be spayed whilst in heat or already pregnant, as bitches in those circumstances may tend to bleed excessively during surgery.

Juvenile pets are smaller, easier to handle, require less anaesthesia and the operations are usually much quicker, making this an extremely cost-effective exercise for the veterinarian. I have been told by one vet, critical of the policies of some veterinary practices, that early neutering was looked on by some vets as a 'loss-leader' and offered at a reduced cost to owners, in the belief that they would then become regular customers. Any outstanding costs from the neutering procedures would then be apportioned to the bills for other animals requiring general surgery!

In the case of bitches, neutering is said to:

Remove the significant health risks associated with pregnancy as well as the possibility of potentially fatal womb infections (pyometra).

Avoid the mess and inconvenience of seasons.

Reduce or remove the risks of some cancers including mammary cancer.

It is certain that a bitch who cannot get in whelp cannot suffer from pregnancy-related health risks or the ones associated with giving birth. However, it is incorrect to say that womb infections such as pyometra are also completely ruled out; in fact stump pyometra can develop from the vestiges of uterine material left after the removal of the uterus.

A better solution to the conventional spay may be ovariectomy, where *only* the ovaries are removed but this operation is much less commonly done and more expensive. "The results of this study indicate that ovariectomy does not increase the risk of CEH-endometritis or other complications in comparison with ovariohysterectomy. It is concluded that there is no indication for removing the uterus during routine neutering in healthy bitches. On the contrary, ovariectomy should be considered the procedure of choice." Okkens et al¹⁶

According to Reichler⁷ (2009) there is a 99.5% reduction of malignant mammary cancer in bitches spayed before their first season. However, bitches spayed after the age of 2 ½ years are at the same risk of developing this disease as those left intact. Whilst Gerry Poulton⁸, European Specialist in Oncology has said, "Neutering bitches reduces the incidence of mammary cancer but not as much as the literature suggests."

Neutering before the musculoskeletal system is mature can cause potential problems; Van Hagan¹⁰ (2005) studying clinical signs of canine hip dysplasia (cCHD) in Boxers found that those that were "neutered at 6 months, prior to a diagnosis of cCHD were 1.5 times as likely to develop cCHD, compared with sexually intact dogs."

Salmeri¹¹ (1991) and Root¹² (1997) found that early neutering meant that closure of the growth plates on the long bones of the body was delayed and the bones grew longer as a result leading to an increased risk of anterior cruciate ligament rupture.

Slauterbeck¹² (2004) identified that "Females that had ovariohysterectomy and males that had orchiectomy had a

significantly higher prevalence of anterior cruciate ligament rupture than the sexually intact dogs. ... Sterilization of either gender increased the prevalence of anterior cruciate ligament injury...."

The increased bone growth of neutered animals means they are also at increased risk of malignant bone cancers such as osteosarcoma, particularly in larger breeds of dog.

"A study comparing 3062 purebred dogs with osteosarcoma and 3959 purebred dogs without osteosarcoma, revealed a two-fold increased risk of osteosarcoma among neutered dogs when compared to intact dogs" (Ru et al. 1998)¹³.

A significant association between early neutering and risk of bone sarcoma was found by Cooley et al¹⁴ (2002). "In males castrated before 1 year of age (lowest gonadal exposure) the risk for bone sarcoma was almost four times greater than in sexually intact males. In females spayed before 1 year of age bone sarcoma incidence was more than three times greater than the rate in sexually intact females." The risk factor was found to be the same whatever the adult height or body weight of the animal.

Ware and Hopper¹⁷ (1999) identified greater risks to neutered dogs in the development of cardiac tumours.

Studies in the last ten years have also shown that neutered males also have a three times greater risk of developing prostate cancer than entire males (Bryan 2007)¹⁵

However some studies, such as those by Kraft (1998) Greer (2007) have also found that the neutered animals tended to have a longer life span and this might have also have an influence on cancer

To Neuter or Not – That is the Question! (Cont)

development; their longer lives may simply give more time for cancer to develop, it might indicate that neutering has some preventative effects regarding disease or it might indicate the owners took greater care of the animals.

Seemingly conflicting data regarding life span was reported by Walters¹⁹ (2007) "In summary, we found female Rottweilers who kept their ovaries for at least 6 years were 4.6 times more likely to reach exceptional longevity (i.e. live more than 30 % longer than average) than females with the shortest ovary exposure. Our results support the notion that how long females keep their ovaries determines how long they live."

The situation with regard to spayed bitches and infections such as vaginitis, however, is

much clearer, according to Professor Steve Dean in his report on the BSAVA Congress for "Dog World". He says, "Where an individual bitch suffers from juvenile vaginitis, it is more difficult to resolve if the bitch is neutered before her first season. In contrast it is worth noting how the condition often resolves if the affected bitch has a season. A case was made therefore for at least delaying the neutering of high risk breeds or dogs with specific diseases."

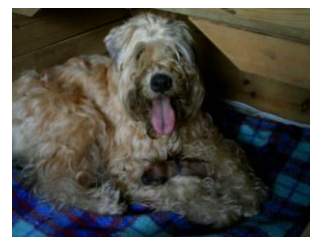
Urinary incontinence has been linked to the neutering of bitches. In a study from the Irish Veterinary Journal Dec¹⁸, 2008; it said that the incidence of reported cases was between 5 and 20%, compared to less than 1% in entire bitches. The report went on to say, "It has been estimated that there is an almost eight-fold increase in the risk of developing urinary

incontinence in neutered compared to entire bitches. (Thrusfield et al. 1998) The average age of the onset was approximately four years (Holt 1987) and 75% had developed the problem within one year of being neutered.

There have been many calls for more robust studies into the long-term risks and benefits of neutering. From the evidence available – and there are many other concerns which have been raised than those recounted here - it is apparent that the arguments for neutering, particularly in the case of a very young animal, are not nearly so clear cut as many people, including vets, might believe.

If you are considering neutering your dog, please make sure it is done at the right age and for the right reasons.

Lynn Carter and Kate Watkins



"The dog's agenda is simple, fathomable, overt: I want. "I want to go out, come in, eat something, lie here, play with that, kiss you. There are no ulterior motives with a dog, no mind games, no second-guessing, no complicated negotiations or bargains, and no guilt trips or grudges if a request is denied."

Caroline Knapp

References and further reading

¹ <http://www.2ndchance.info/spayneuter.htm>

² <http://www.dogstrust.org.uk>

^{3/4/5/8} Notes from "Neutering Is Not So Neutral" seminar 12/05/12 – Nick Thompson BSc (Hons) Path Sci., BVM&S, VetMfHom, MRCVS

¹⁰ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15757132>

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¹⁵ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17516571>

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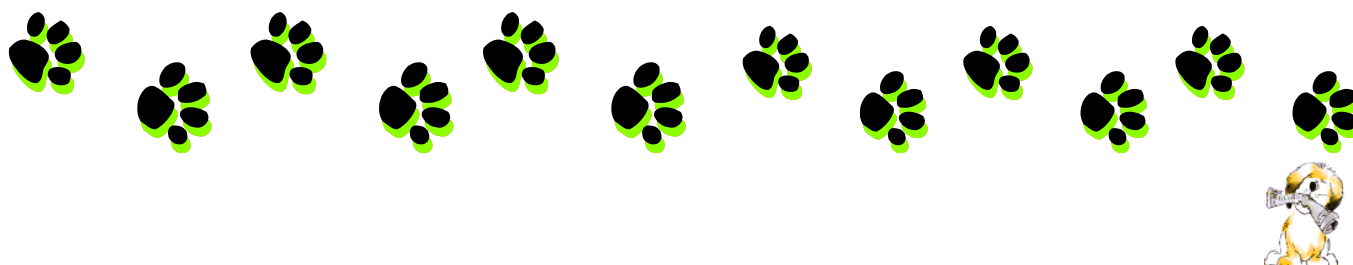
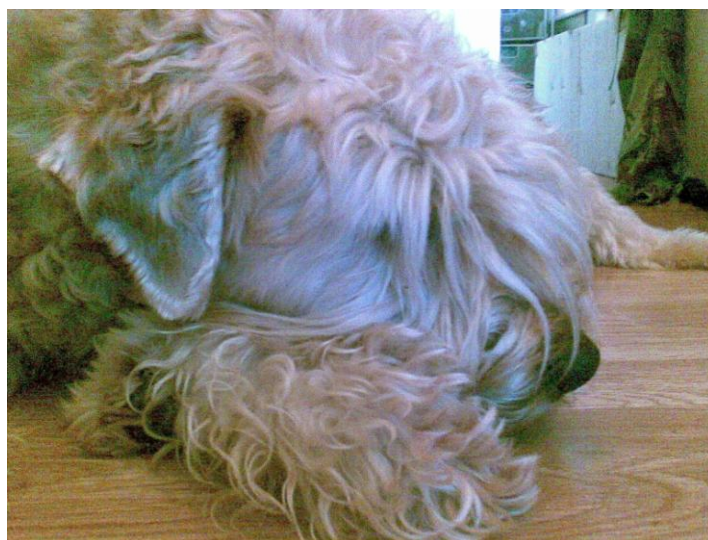
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Stan Rawlinson, MTCBPT, MPAAC A.dipCCB

www.doglistener.co.uk



Degenerative Myelopathy



We could have bought a small yacht with what we spent on our dog and all the things he destroyed. Then again, how many yachts wait by the door all day for your return?

John Grogan Marley and Me



Degenerative Myelopathy, or DM, is a disease that causes progressive deterioration of the spinal cord in older dogs, eventually resulting in rear end paralysis. It is associated with a number of breeds including German Shepherd Dogs, Rhodesian Ridgebacks and Corgis. It is thought to be genetic in nature, being caused by a gene mutation, and a DNA test is now available to identify this gene following research carried out at the Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine by Dr Gary Johnson and others.

An article published in "Wheaten Health News" published by the SCWTCA in Spring 2009 tells us that as part of the DM research at Missouri DNA samples from 29 SCWTs were tested with none of them testing as affected, i.e. carrying two copies of the mutated gene. Of the sample, 5 (17%) had one copy and may be considered to be carriers. The remaining 24 Wheatens tested as normal, which means that they had no mutated copies of the gene.

Because this test has *not* been validated for SCWTs only further genetic testing of affected dogs will help to verify the validity of it.

At the time of the article Dr Johnson was requesting blood samples from Wheatens with a diagnosis of DM. The article also indicated that research was continuing in an attempt to determine if environmental or other factors may also be

involved in the development of DM.

The article went on to discuss recommendations for Wheaten owners and breeders in relation to this disease. Importantly, because of the low occurrence of DM, it is not recommended that this test is used on the whole Wheaten population but suggests consideration ought to be given to testing high profile stud dogs and brood bitches.

There is also a series of "Updates" in which the implications of DM on SCWTs are considered and information and recommendations noted; an example being that dogs identified as 'carriers' of DM are highly unlikely to develop the disease, and they may continue to be used in breeding programmes *provided that the partner Wheaten is also tested.*

The full article and updates can be found at <http://www.scwtca.org/health/healthisnews.htm> and whilst written very much from a US viewpoint it is very interesting and gives pointers to all Wheaten Terrier owners in relation to this condition.

In the UK cases of Myelopathy have been reported in SCWTs since the mid- 1980s causing the Committee to wonder at one point, if it was something to be concerned about, as a growing, breed-specific problem. Happily, although cases do continue to arise from time to time, all of the evidence points

towards this not being the case at present.

As this is a degenerative condition it is unlikely that any radical change will be noticed, but signs to watch out for are reluctance to exercise, difficulty in getting up and dragging the hind paws when walking, causing wear on the nails; all of these should be checked out by a vet should they occur.

As with all problems, it is important to know if there have ever been any cases in your dog's pedigree, and your first port of call should be the breeder of your Wheaten who ought to be able to help you with this.

The SCWT Club Health Committee will keep records of affected dogs that they are informed of, although sharing information which they have been given in confidence is a problem for them, as they feel that this action is prevented under the Data Protection Act.

Should your own Wheaten, or any Wheaten you have bred, develop DM you should ensure that the Club is aware of this. Personally, I would add a rider stating that I would be happy to discuss this with anyone who needed to know, as sharing information about any problems that arise is ultimately the best way to control them.

Jan Thackray



Old Age means realizing you will never own all the dogs you wanted to.

Joe Gores



Wheaten Health Initiative

“To provide a platform for the reception and transmission of information about the health and well-being of the Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier”

“Perhaps one central reason for loving dogs is that they take us away from this obsession with ourselves. When our thoughts start to go in circles, and we seem unable to break away, wondering what horrible event the future holds for us, the dog opens a window into the delight of the moment.”

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson



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