

Dear Deerhound Breed Society and owners of Deerhounds,

My name is Lowri Heseltine and I am a third year veterinary student at the University of Nottingham. Under the supervision of Dr Mark Dunning I will be conducting a research project studying atrial fibrillation in giant breed dogs and I would like to introduce this project to the Deerhound owners and breeders. As you are aware, atrial fibrillation is a common condition in the giant breeds including the Great Danes, Deerhounds and Irish Wolfhounds (the former and latter are the other breeds involved in this project). This condition fascinates me as there is not yet a confirmed link between atrial fibrillation and blood clots (thromboembolic disease) in dogs, as we see in humans. The aim of my project will be to establish if there is in fact a connection in dogs suffering with atrial fibrillation and death or complications due to mortality the formation of blood clots. By establishing if there is a link we could open the door to potential future research into the benefits of medication to help reduce the chances of developing blood clots and possibly improve the outcome for dogs suffering with atrial fibrillation.

As part of the research I will be working with cardiologists where I will study case histories and outcomes of dogs affected by AF. In addition to this aspect of the project, we would like to work directly with the owners and breeders of the giant breeds to gather crucial information from them. I therefore request your help with this as you will be key to the success of the project. It will be highly beneficial for me to conduct a survey with the owners of Deerhounds that have been diagnosed with atrial fibrillation to gain an insight into the condition in these dogs. The criteria for being involved would be that the dog has a confirmed diagnosis of atrial fibrillation. The survey will be an online questionnaire (a paper version can also be made available) that asks questions under the following categories:

- Contact details of the owners (which cannot be shared and will be kept confidential within the research group)
- General information about the dogs (e.g. age, level of exercise, neutering status)
- Clinical information with regards to the atrial fibrillation (e.g. how it was diagnosed, treatment/management strategies for the AF or any other medical condition)
- General clinical information (e.g. comorbidities)
- Details of death if applicable (which I understand is highly emotional for owners and will therefore do my utmost to ask these questions in the most sensitive manner possible)

I would be incredibly grateful if you could distribute an online questionnaire link for owners of dogs suffering with atrial fibrillation. I hope very much this project is of interest to the breed society and you feel this would be of interest to your members. Should this be the case, I will contact you in the near future with further details about the project and the links to the surveys.

I thank you very much in anticipation for your time and input into this project and hope that I can get some valuable results which are beneficial to the future health of the breed. As mentioned, we intend on contacting you soon with further information regarding the questionnaire. If you have any queries in the meantime please do not hesitate to contact me or Dr Mark Dunning and we will do our best to answer any questions you may have (my email address is syylh2@nottingham.ac.uk). Your contribution will be invaluable and I am very grateful for your input.

Best wishes,

Lowri Heseltine

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