

Summary of the second owner breeder research forum for Irish Wolfhounds and Deerhounds at Nottingham Vet School

Saturday the 6th February saw the second Irish Wolfhound (IWH) and Deerhound owner breeder forum at School of Veterinary Medicine and Science.

Around 40 delegates were in attendance, which given the horrendous weather was a fantastic show of support for the on-going collaboration between Nottingham Vet School and the Deerhound and Irish Wolfhound groups. As with the first forum, this second forum began with a welcome, followed by facilitated small group discussions. These discussions focused on the health problems facing owners of both IWH and Deerhounds and whether these had evolved in the 2 years since the last meeting. Following a short break, we had a very interesting owner presentation concerning recurrent respiratory disease in a wolfhound puppy. This was particularly relevant given the project currently running with the IWH breed. This was followed by presentations from the clinical and research staff at the Vet School. The initial presentation summarised the current projects and their status. The vet school scientists and clinicians, undertaking the research into diseases and disorders on both IWH and Deerhounds, gave the subsequent presentations. From our ongoing canine genetics and health research we presented work from two papers that we have written and published in journals, plus some abstracts at conferences, that have a direct impact on diseases in both breeds. Specifically we reviewed the current understanding of the genetics of osteosarcoma and the importance of breed specific research into this disease, as the genetic abnormalities in one breed are not routinely present in others. The complex genetic influences on the development and progression of canine dilated cardiomyopathy were also discussed and was this followed up by a review of the advantages and disadvantages of heart testing. These were followed by a short question and answer session and then lunch.

The afternoon session saw the delegates return to hear summaries of the morning's small-group discussions. These were largely similar to before however a number of other topics were raised that were considered of importance:

Elbow dysplasia: this is something that Deerhound and IWH owners have been increasingly concerned about but there is no testing scheme in the UK although there is in the USA.

Pregnancy resorption: some litters had been reported to have been lost for no apparent reason.

Metabolic differences: the owner and veterinary awareness of the differences in tolerances to various drugs in site hounds.

Longevity: it was thought by some delegates that the lifespans of IWH and Deerhounds had been declining.

Following these summaries, a number of additional points were discussed. One important point was how best to maintain momentum and engagement with the current projects and ensure that on-going recruitment and data collection remained high. One of the problems faced by on-going project is a natural attrition of participants recruited at the outset. It is crucial that the early momentum is retained to maximise the value of any long-term health study. The value of a group of owners being directly involved in this and being responsible for the social media and website project promotions was discussed and was thought to be a very positive step. It was felt this was of great value to the projects as the owners would already be familiar with the important social media forums and would maximise publicity and recruitment via these routes. It was therefore decided to recruit owners into the ongoing health

programme. This will be discussed with the breed clubs over the next two months and appointments made soon after that. The appropriate timing and dissemination of project updates was also discussed. This will be maintained going forward to ensure that all owners and breeders are aware of the status of each project and how to become involved.

Having reviewed the current projects and discussed some of the additional concerns in the breeds, the delegates were asked whether they felt new projects would be of value. After a group discussion, it was decided that the current projects would remain the focus for at least the next 12 months. The possibility of developing a screening programme for elbow dysplasia and extending the current Deerhound bloat study to the IWH was considered and will be discussed via the health clubs next year.

Prior to conclusion of the forum, the importance of funding was again discussed, particularly the difficulties posed in securing sufficient funds for large-scale genetics projects. Small amounts of funding are available from various sources and it was highlighted that we had secured a small amount of funding for the Deerhound bloat study from the Kennel Club. This is an important achievement as the study would not have been able to take place if this had not been secured.

The day concluded on a positive note with the delegates all keen to continue to support and develop the current projects. The third IWH-Deerhound breeder forum will take place in 2018, details will follow in due course. We will continue to provide owners and breeders of IWH and Deerhounds with updates which will be posted on the Vet school's own website and disseminated via the health groups and social media forums.

We would like to thank all of the delegates that supported this second day and we hope that we can continue to work productively with you

With best wishes



Mark Dunning
Clinical Associate Professor in Small Animal Medicine
mark.dunning@nottingham.ac.uk

(on behalf of the Canine Health Genomics research group)

The currently running projects are as follows:

- **The investigation of bloat in Deerhounds**
- **The investigation of factors influencing the development and outcome of osteosarcoma in IWH and Deerhounds**
- **The investigation of factors influencing the development and outcome of DCM in IWH and Deerhounds**
- **The investigation of factors affecting the development of juvenile fibrocartilagenous emboli in IWH**
- **An investigation into the changes in the fertility of male pedigree dogs (both Deerhounds and IWH)**
- **An investigation into the underlying causes and outcomes in cases of respiratory disease in IWH (the continuation of the IWH pneumonia project)**
- **A review of the health documents provided to owners and vets by the breed health groups**

Further details of the projects are available on the respective breed websites and the vet school's own website or on request if additional information is required.