**BORDER TERRIER BREED HEALTH GROUP**

**NOTES ON MEETING AT PARK HOTEL, YORK**

**ON SUNDAY DECEMBER 8, 2019 AT 10.30 A.M.**

**Present: Professor Steve Dean (SD) – in the Chair**

**Dr Andrew Harbottle (AH)**

**Dr Eddie Houston (EH)**

**Professor Jeff Sampson (JS)**

**In Attendance:**

**Ronnie Irving (RI)**

1. **SLEM**

It was agreed that the introduction of the DNA Test had been very successful and the take up by breeders had been encouraging. Up to November 2019 nearly 1,400 dogs had been tested. Of these 85.9% had been tested clear with 14.0% carriers and only 2 (0.1%) affected. With so many dogs now being hereditarily clear the numbers being tested were declining and in the last six months only 127 had been tested of which 117 (92.1%) were declared ‘clear’.

It was noted that as requested by the breed clubs, the KC had classified the official SLEM Test as a ‘recommendation’ for ABS members. The Group discussed whether or not the KC should be asked to upgrade the classification to ‘required’ but recommended this is unnecessary.

The Group was of the view that it was unwise of the KC to adopt the policy that after two generations of dogs declared on KC records as hereditarily clear, the subsequent generations would not be given such official description. Although the reasons for such a policy were understood, it was felt that this approach was inclined to undermine rather than support the validity of the test. It was agreed that the Group should not support the policy but should instead encourage the owners of hereditarily clear sires to be tested if they appeared to be becoming frequently used.

Advice would be provided on the BHG website on a hereditarily clear breed policy and the Kennel Club should be informed of this decision. (Action BHC)

1. **CECS**

The study by Mark Lowrie and the AHT had been delayed while the research team obtained the relevant RCVS ethical approvals, but these were now in place and volunteered dogs for the study had been sought.

The Group agreed to contact Mark Lowrie to ask if he had obtained enough volunteer candidates with the correct profiles, and to offer support in giving any further publicity to his requirements if there remained any shortage of suitable candidates.

Full support was given to the research work to be done, but caution was again expressed on the low expectation of the Health Group that the work would result in straightforward advice being available to breeders as a consequence. It was again felt that further effort be made to moderate the expectations of supporters of the breed.

Mention was again made of the fact that in coeliac disease in humans (a similar illness to CECS, centred around gluten sensitivity), the genetic marker for the condition was present in around 45% of the general population while the incidence of the condition itself was very small in comparison. This meant that the genetic marker had not proved to be a good predictive tool for that condition.

Disappointment was again expressed on the fact that so far very few people were completing the CECS questionnaire and the General Health Survey on the Breed Health Group Website. The breed clubs had given further publicity to the Questionnaire and Survey but it was felt that attempts should be made to involve as great a number of pet owners as possible to complete the Questionnaire and Survey, and that the organisers of Borderfest should be invited to help with this task.

It was felt that sufficient advice on CECS was currently available on the BHG Website but that this aspect should be kept constantly under review.

1. **GALL BLADDER MUCOCOELE:**

The Mark Dunning Study at Nottingham Veterinary School is underway in an attempt to establish the nature of the condition. The Group was astonished to hear that 2,000 responses had been received following the research group’s request for information about Border Terriers suspected of having the condition, to support this research study.

EH agreed to research further the apparent incidence of the condition in Shetland Sheepdogs, Cocker Spaniels and Miniature Schnauzers in the USA and to ask Marg Pough for information about it in Border Terriers there as well. (Action: EH)

It was also agreed that the condition should be given Open Register treatment on the BHG Website and that first Steve Dean should write up a protocol for the diagnosis required before each dog's name can be added to the Register.

The Group agreed to employ this approach and publication of confirmed cases on the BHG Website would be a consequence, giving the KC registered name of the dog itself, and the names of its parents. Before publication, each case would be verified as meeting diagnostic protocol requirements by the Breed Health Coordinator. (Action: SPD)

1. **EARLY ONSET CATARACT**

Emails had been received giving details of 10 dogs largely from international sources in the USA and Scandinavia.

It was again agreed that Steve Dean should contact the Chairman of the UK BVA Eye Panel to ask if he/she could ask colleagues overseas, for any further information they might have of the condition in Border Terriers, and then decide what further action should be taken. (Action: SPD)

1. **CUSHINGS DISEASE**

VetCompass information indicated that the prevalence of this condition was approximately the same in Border Terriers as it is on average for all breeds.

It was agreed that the condition should be given Open Register treatment on the BHG Website and that first EH should write up a protocol for the diagnosis required, before dogs’ names can be added to the Register. (Action: EH)

Meantime it was felt that no other breed specific research should be called for, but that the breed should work within the aegis of other non-breed specific research being carried out on the condition.

1. **OTHER CONDITIONS**

No other new emerging conditions had been intimated or encountered.

1. **BREED CONSERVATION PLAN**

The meeting with the Kennel Club Health Group had taken place in June 2018 and the following action points had been agreed:

* The Kennel Club to investigate the possibility of developing an optimum contribution tool with Dr Lewis.
* The breed clubs to put in a request to make SLEM a recommendation under the Assured Breeder Scheme.
* The Kennel Club and the Border Terrier Breed Health Group to enquire on the progress of CECS research.
* The Border Terrier Breed Health Group to develop a gall bladder mucocoele open register.
* The Border Terrier Breed Health Group to develop a Cushing’s disease open register.
* The Kennel Club to investigate if there is to be a Cushing’s disease VetCompass paper.
* The Border Terrier Breed Health Group and to encourage participation in any relevant epilepsy research.
* The Kennel Club to provide a link to the Border Terrier Bread Health Group website on the Border Terrier page of the Kennel Club website.
* The Kennel Club to review progress with the Border Terrier Breed Health Group breed club representatives in June 2019.

The meeting specified in the last bullet point had not taken place because of various changes taking place at the Kennel Club.

1. **OPTIMUM CONTRIBUTION OF SIRES**

It was agreed that, as above, the project should again be taken up with the KC through Tom LewIs. What was thought to be required is a system to calculate the influence of stud dogs on the genetic population of the breed and to show when sires are approaching a maximum advisable contribution level. The possibility of publication of the results on the KC Mate Select Facility with a red/amber/green indicator given, would be suggested.

1. **FUNDS HELD FOR BREED HEALTH**

It had been confirmed by Bill Shorthose the Joint Border Terrier Clubs’ Treasurer that the current sum ring-fenced for health matters within the Joint Border Terrier Clubs’ Account was £15,854.14.

It was felt that there were no immediate requirements to deploy these funds but that the clubs and supporters should be encouraged to continue raising funds for this purpose as an insurance against future needs.

Thanks were expressed to the Clubs and to those who had been working to fundraise for these purposes.

1. **WEBSITE**

Thanks were extended to Euan Castel for the immense amount of work that he does to keep the Website current.

It was agreed that as the website was growing in content, it would be helpful if the Homepage could perhaps include a list of (and links to) major issues.

RI agreed to talk to Euan about this.

1. **BREED HEALTH COORDINATOR AND CONSTITUENT MEMBERS OF BHG**

Steve Dean intimated that after many years in the position he had decided step down as the Border Terrier Breed Health Coordinator as from December 31st this year. He has however agreed to stay on as a Member of the Breed Health Group. The Group thanked Steve for his past contribution and confirmed that it looks forward to having his continued help as a BHG Member in the future.

The Group decided to propose Eddie Houston to be Steve’s successor from January 1, 2020, and will ask the seven breed clubs for their support for that proposal.

In addition the Group discussed the proposal to nominate Laura Jordan-Smith B Vet Med, MRCVS as an additional BHG Member. Laura is a Veterinary Surgeon in practice and has been showing Border Terriers for some time now under the kennel name ‘Jordith’. The BHG will put this proposal to the seven breed clubs for approval.

1. **BUYING A BORDER TERRIER PUPPY**

It was agreed that an article on ‘Buying a Border Terrier Puppy’ with some reference to health issues, ought to be prepared for the BHG Website.

It was agreed that RI should prepare a first draft of this.

1. **CONCLUSION**

JS said that having had much experience of such issues while working at the Kennel Club and having listened to the various discussions today, he felt that the BHG was concentrating on sensible issues and was taking appropriate actions.

1. **NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that, unless there was an urgent need otherwise, the next meeting of the Group should be held in September or October 2020.

It was also agreed that the Park Hotel York was a suitable venue.

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**Afternoon Meeting with Breed Club Representatives**

The meeting was Chaired by RI. It was attended by those listed as present above and:

Mike Hollingsbee – East Anglia BTC

Chris Wallace – Midland BTC

Eddie Houston represented the Border Terrier Club

Apologies had been received from:

Anne Gregory - Scottish BTC

Anne Heathcote – Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire BTC

Christine Horner – Northern BTC

Tony Wrenn – Southern BTC

All of the issues covered at the meeting earlier in the day as above (except items 11 and 13) were discussed and reviewed and there was broad support for the conclusions reached and recommendations made.

The topic of high volume breeders registering several litters per quarter apparently from dogs not known to be clear of SLEM was raised. Chris Wallace was asked to research statistics on this matter.

**AFTERNOTE:** CW has subsequently reported that he has reviewed the last 4 Breed Record Supplements and that in that period five breeders had more than three litters in a quarter, but that of that five litters all sires were Slem Clear or Hereditary Clear apart from one litter.