

Health Matters!

Health Co-ordinator: Tony McDermott

Hello,

I have agreed to become Health Co-ordinator for the SCGB but I won't be able to do much on this job unless I get feedback and info from you.

If you have any queries, views or conditions you think the breed should know about, then let me know. All information will be treated confidentially unless you give specific authority otherwise but it would be helpful, when reporting any condition, to provide as much info as you can (Vet report/pedigree/age/size/etc). You'll find my details are in the Committee listing in this issue.

Disappointing news from The Animal Health Trust regarding their planned work into Congenital Hereditary Cataract (CHC). Due to the low output from existing DNA samples, some 15 need to be redone before the Whole Genome Scan (WGS) can commence. The AHT has contacted the 15 owners but, sadly, only 3 have so far responded.

If any Mini owners have been asked to re-supply a DNA sample and haven't done so yet, for the sake of the breed, please, please, do so urgently. Remember, the Joint Miniature Schnauzer Eye Fund have raised over £52,000 so far, to fund part of the research as soon as sufficient useable samples are available.

Some good news though, (well, it's the sort of news you would expect in normal daily life!). Health Co-ordinators, representing each of the UK clubs involved with Schnauzers, are meeting to see if the 4 clubs can work together for the good of the breeds (not before time I hear most people shout!). Reps from the Giant, the Miniature, the Northern plus ourselves, will have met by the time you read this. Hopefully, it will lead to a unified approach for all health matters relating to each size.

There are still cases of CHC and Hereditary Cataract (HC) being diagnosed in Miniature Schnauzers, both conditions having confirmed cases within the last 12 months. With only about 40% of all litters being screened for CHC, and considerably less than 5% of all adult Miniatures being tested for HC each year, these conditions remain a major concern for the breed.

News of another condition in Miniature Schnauzers, Mycobacterium Avium Complex (MAC), surfaced in the UK within the last year or so. Two puppies born from a half brother/half sister mating were diagnosed with the condition. It is known to be fatal but there have only been about 50 cases in the world, all of which all trace their ancestry back to one dog. We don't think it is a major concern in the UK but if your lines have US ancestry and you are considering breeding, then it is important that you find out about this condition. There is an interesting article of the American MSC site under 'Health'. Our thanks and best wishes must go to Carol Burton for being both extremely brave and responsible in bringing this matter out in the open.

The AHT is involved in a general European-wide study on Epilepsy in dogs, so if you have experienced this condition in any of the 3 sizes, it is important that you record the details and advise the breeder and the breed clubs. Sending DNA swabs to the AHT is also hugely beneficial to the breed. These cheek swabs are easy to take and swab kits can be obtained from the AHT (E-mail: lisa.jeffery@aht.org.uk) or me. Full instructions are supplied with each set and there is no 'special' packaging required. You simply pop the swabs in the envelope and send it via normal post.

We have had a number of cases of epilepsy in Giants reported to us, so the SCGB has asked the owners for permission to reproduce the pedigrees of affected dogs in the next issue. The condition also presents itself in Miniatures and, whilst there is no specific research planned for the breed, the AHT are interested in receiving DNA swabs

The AHT are also involved with another pan-European study into melanomas in dogs. Whilst there is no specific reference to any of the 3 sizes of Schnauzer (despite what some websites and clubs may claim) the AHT are interested in DNA swabs from affected dogs and unaffected older dogs. So, if you are interested in submitting DNA from your dog(s) contact the AHT direct or talk to me. See the article by Mike Starkey (AHT) on the SCGB's website

If you have a dog affected by these conditions, or any other, please advise your breeder and the breed clubs.

Whatever you do, don't keep quiet – even if someone asks you to – that route only leads to creating a bigger problem in the breed for years to come. Don't take my word for it, just look at what happened in Miniatures. There were eye cases in the 1970s & 1980s but not publicised, which is why we are having to deal with these problems some 30 years later.

Annual Breed Health Survey.

Please complete a survey form for your Schnauzer (whatever size) simply by downloading it from this website (click here). This is the first of what we hope will be an annual, breed health survey, to identify and track health issues in all three sizes.

It's part of the SCGB response to the KC Health Plan of December 2008 and, hopefully a joint initiative with all the UK Schnauzer Breeds clubs.

The Joint Breed Health Survey could become a valuable source of information for the future. When the returns are analysed, the results will be announced and published in SAGA and available on the website. This can only happen, if **YOU** respond.

I know these things are a pain BUT, think of the pleasure your Schnauzer (of any size) gives you.... this is a simple way of giving something back.

The form is designed to be completed for each dog; if you need more copies, please download them from the SCGB website, or ask a committee member to let you have one. Copies will be available at the August and November Open Shows (see 'events' page for details).

If you know someone with a Schnauzer (any size) who is not a member of the club, then please ask them to complete one, too. The more data we collate, the better overall picture we can achieve on the health status of the Schnauzer breeds in the UK.

We expect to find it is very healthy! but only your information can prove it.

Don't put it to one side. Please do it today and return it as soon as possible.

Many thanks in advance.

Health Testing – Miniature Schnauzers

When looking for a puppy, any caring and responsible breeder will be able to show you Eye Test Certificates of the mother and confirm that the sire has a clear certificate (both should be dated within the previous 12 months). You would also be given a copy of the Litter Screening Form to prove that the litter is clear of eye problems when you purchase the puppy.

Cataracts, (both 'Hereditary' and 'Congenital Hereditary' forms) and **Generalised Progressive Retinal Atrophy** (PRA), occur in the Miniature Schnauzer. Every endeavour must be made to eradicate such problems from the breed and it is strongly recommended that all Miniature Schnauzers are eye-tested annually, by Vets registered to undertake such eye examinations, under British Veterinary Association/The Kennel Club (BVA/KC) Eye Scheme.

When should we Eye Test?

Puppies can be eye-tested for the Congenital Hereditary form of Cataracts at about 6 - 8 weeks, before their sale as show dogs or pets.

Identification of either Hereditary Cataract (HC) or PRA requires annual examinations, as these conditions both develop later.

Hereditary Cataract can only be diagnosed from about 6 months onward and sometimes even later than aged 2 years. Therefore all Miniature Schnauzers should be eye-tested again by the age of 12 months

PRA may not appear until 2 years of age upwards, but may be detected in some breeds at any point between 6 months and 6 years. The earliest

reported case in Miniature Schnauzers was in a 3 year old. So, all Miniature Schnauzers in breeding plans should be eye-tested annually

The Need to Eye Test regularly

It is imperative that all Miniature Schnauzers and Giant Schnauzers, especially breeding stock, are checked annually, up to about 8 years of age, by a BVA/KC Panellist. Ask your breeder or Vet, to give you more information and to tell you how to obtain the name of your closest Eye Panellist Vet.

What should I do if my Dog has problems?

If your dog is diagnosed with any of these eye problems or any other, it is in the interest of all Miniature Schnauzers, to advise The Schnauzer Club of Great Britain, Northern Schnauzer Club or the Miniature Schnauzer Club, and the breeder.

If my dog is diagnosed with CHC, HC or PRA, why should we tell anyone?

Things occur even in the most carefully planned breeding programmes; it is only through exchange of information that will we eventually eradicate these problems from our favourite breed. It is important to tell the owners of the sire and dam, because neither parent should be bred from again. Also, it is important to tell owners of the other puppies in the litter, because those should not be bred from.

Why hasn't a solution been found yet?

Because of the mode of inheritance, (described as 'recessive') it's not possible to identify those which carry the gene. This can only be shown up by a test mating programme, or by owners of affected dogs advising other owners, through the SCGB, the Miniature or the Northern Club, so that alternative action can be taken for the future. The AHT is planning research programmes to achieve blood tests to identify the defective genes which causes these inherited conditions, but there is a tremendous amount of work still to do.

What are the Breed Clubs doing?

The clubs involved with the Miniature Schnauzer breed (Northern, MSC & SCGB) in conjunction with other Clubs, support the BVA/KC Eye-Testing Scheme, organise low-cost eye-testing sessions and are raising funds, through the JMSEF, to initiate these research programmes with the Animal Health Trust.

The Giant Schnauzer Club agrees that similar requirements for eye testing Giants – both for litter screening and eye testing of breeding stock – are necessary.

A current list of the 31 Eye Panellists and all their locations can be found on the BVA website www.bva.co.uk. (click on ***Canine Health Schemes***, then click on ***Eye Scheme*** – this will also show the latest costs).

Health Testing – Giant Schnauzers

It is now recommended that Giant Schnauzers have eye testing for Hereditary Cataract. The reasons for testing Mature Giants are exactly the same as for Miniatures – see above.

Litter screening of Giant puppies is also highly recommended Testing on Giant puppies is for Multi Focal Retinal Dysplasia (MRD - not Cataracts) and can take place between 6 and 12 weeks. Again, all caring and responsible breeder will be able to show you the Litter Screening Form to prove that the litter has been checked for.

Health screening for Hip Dysplasia (hip scoring) of Giant Schnauzers is now on the list of recommended health checks required of Accredited Breeders. Full details about the BVA/KC Hip Dysplasia Scheme can be found on the BVA website (www.bva.co.uk)

Any health issues you want us to cover in future issues? Then let me know. I can't promise to have the answers but I will at least try.

Tony McDermott

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Please put *Schnauzer Health* in the subject line.