



CAIRN TERRIER HEALTH GROUP REPORT 2018

The yearly report has traditionally started with Sincere Thanks to owners, who have been in contact during the year with welcome updates or for help and advice. This year my Thanks is somewhat tainted with sadness, because this is my last report due to my retirement from the CTHG. I will of course still very much appreciate hearing about the dogs I have followed, some very long term. Help is always still at hand.

My very first Health Report had the following statement “The Cairn Terrier is luckily a typically robust and healthy breed, but vigilance is necessary to ensure that it remains that way”. Those words are, in my opinion, as relevant now as then. There are however some, who claim that the breed has so many health problems. This is not an opinion shared by the many Vets I talk to. They generally think it is a breed without many health problems. Cairns can of course suffer ill health, just like other dogs and humans too, but they are spared multiple hereditary problems affecting so many breeds. The liver diseases Porto Systemic Shunt (PSS) and MVD and eye condition Ocular Melanosis (OM) still appear to be the only diseases of certain heritable nature and where cases have been repeatedly reported. It seemed like a step forward, when quite some years ago by now, the KC agreed to add both Bile Acid testing of puppies and Yearly Eye testing as recommendations for Assured Breeders. Swab samples have been forwarded to research for both conditions and the AHT sequenced the DNA from a Cairn with OM and this has also been made available for research. Let’s hope DNA tests will soon be available!

I have also, in previous Health Reports, mentioned a variety of reported conditions, but this list has got most together in one place :

Addison’s disease; Advanced retinal degeneration and optic nerve atrophy; Bladder cancer; Bladder stones; Corneal ulcer; Cushing’s disease; Diabetes; Endometriosis with anaemia; Epilepsy; Granulomatous colitis; Hip dysplasia; Hydrometra; Hypothyroidism; Immune Mediated Meningitis; Iris melanoma; Ischemic myelopathy; Keratoconjunctivitis Sicca (KCS); Kidney disease; Liver cancer; Mitochondrial Fatty Acid Oxidation; Myasthenia Gravis; Nasal carcinoma; Osteosarcoma; Pancreatitis; Parvo in fully vaccinated pup; Polyarthritis; Renal failure/PLN; SARDS; Steroid Responsive Meningitis Arteris (SRMA); Testicular cancer; Vestibular Disease.

If that list looks scary, then it must realised that most of the diseases are only represented by a single reported case. The cancers were in elderly dogs. Added to the list could also be two of the most common conditions all vets treat pets for , namely Obesity and Skin problems, the latter often found to be caused by harvest mites or visiting fleas.

The KC has organised a yearly Breed Health Coordinator Seminar for a long time now and I have sometimes, in the Health Report, included information from talks given that year. Dr Mike Starkey is oncology specialist at the AHT (the only canine cancer

research centre in UK) and he was mentioned 2015. He was yet again one of the speakers at the 2018 Seminar and gave an excellent presentation including ongoing DNA research and treatment options. Cancer affects 1 in 4 dogs and is the most common cause of death in dogs over the age of 10. It was also stated that most types of cancer affect most breeds but a few breeds are more susceptible to certain cancers. Such susceptibility is believed to be inherited, if multiple dogs in different generations of multiple families are affected by the same cancer and the incidence is significantly higher (Odds Ratio >1.0) than in most other breeds.

Dr Tom Lewis, KC Quantitative Geneticist, did also give a talk on Genetic Diversity and Effective Population Sizes, reported on earlier. It really did come to my mind when reading the KC registration figures for the last decade. The registered number of puppies has drastically gone down from 1,946 registered 2008 to 589 in 2017 (the 4th Qtr for 2018 not yet published but the 3 Qtrs showed 431 so the total for the year not likely to be better than in -17). The total for the 5 years 2008 – 2012 is 7.265 whilst the total for 2013 – 2017 is 4.100. This really illustrates the recent decline and is, I believe, the greatest threat to the breed. Which brings me back to that talk on Genetic Diversity. Dr Lewis had pointed out that our breed had reached a genetic bottleneck some time ago, but had slightly recovered. This registration trend can easily again have a negative effect on genetic diversity, but could be counteracted by breeders making use of more males (less concentration on Popular Sires), welcome wisely chosen Imports and, above all, try and promote the breed so more puppies can be bred and find good homes. Enthusiastic and friendly owners out and about with well socialised, friendly and happy dogs can attract new fans. Participation in various obedience type or agility activities, like we have recently seen at Crufts, can also attract positive attention. Cairns will certainly never be 'handbag dogs', but they are small enough to suit people of all ages and life styles. They are happy enough to partake in whatever activity the owner enjoys but don't have demands on much exercise, they are typically healthy and long lived and they are great with children – what's not to like? Fashion in dogs has, as we know, drastically changed, but hopefully the Cairn can win back some of its previous popularity.

The BREEDERS are custodians of this lovely breed and only they can really affect its future health. I have previously, possibly repeatedly, pointed out the importance of keeping long-term contact with puppies produced, since it is the only way to find out if a problem crops up in a breeding program. If it happens, then the thinking cap has to be put on and the program changed. It has to be remembered that sometimes conditions, that are not actually breed problems but of familial nature, can emerge and have to be remedied. The OWNERS can also help by remembering to keep the breeders informed about how the puppy they bred is getting on in life.

New contact for information is **Jennie Fairweather**, email: ockcairns@yahoo.com
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Sincere Thanks to a benefactor for the generous donation of £100 to the Health Fund!

Enough from me now. I wish Happy&Healthy lives to all Cairnites and Cairns !

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