

**LABRADOR RETRIEVER BREED COUNCIL Health Sub-Committee  
MEETING held at West Of England LRC Show on 5.11.2005**

PRESENT: All 6 delegates: Margaret Brown (chair) *MB*, Fiona Braddon *FB*, Janet Cole *JC*, Lynda Heron *LH*, Jackie Hodge *JH* & Janice Pritchard *JP*.

*HSC* = sub-committee

***Sadly Janice Pritchard passed away in December 05. She had a lifelong commitment to improving the health of the Labrador Retriever and made an immense contribution to the breed. She was an invaluable source of expert advice and guidance to the Health Sub Committee and we can only say that we were lucky to benefit from her knowledge in those last precious months of her life.***

**1. GENERAL**

It was felt that progress had been made since first positive meeting with Dr. Jeff Sampson (KC genetics co-ordinator) in April 2005. HSC felt he had listened to us. Now the HSC team will be v. active & practical before end of 2005 to prepare for Breed Council for meeting in April 2005.

- MRD point arising from Meeting 27.4.05

Discussed Jeff Sampson's comments on advice from panellists re breeding, *JP* felt this should have been challenged & explained further as panellists are first point of contact when a dog is affected by an eye disease & panellists can give useful advice even though not dog breeders/geneticists themselves.

- *JP* suggested that Minutes & Proposals from this meeting are circulated via Breed Council by 2005 & then the 13 breed clubs are asked to discuss & decide/vote on points prior to next BC meeting in April 2006. AGMs could be a useful forum for receiving feedback from members.
- *HSC* may wish to hold next Health sub-committee meeting at KC after the morning's BC meeting.

**2. FEEDBACK FROM CLUBS on HEALTH MATTERS**

Two issues for discussion were received from the LRC & LRC of Scotland. Dr. J. Sampson at KC also asked the HSC to discuss two new health issues. Verbal points from other clubs were raised via delegates. The new OptiGen DNA test for GPRA & the new KC proposals for becoming a Labrador Retriever KC Accredited Breeder were the 2 major issues requested for our attention, we therefore concentrated on these.

- *HSC* asked that each breed club appoint a representative from their committee to communicate with one of the link Health delegates, thus improving communication & representation. Each HSC member was allocated 2 clubs, see APPENDIX attached

**The New OptiGen Mutation Gene Test for *prcd*-PRA in the Labrador Retriever**

When it comes to health issues the SC felt that GUIDELINES NOT RULES are the best way forward for free thinking British breeders, who are dedicated to the whole Labrador Retriever.

**Background:**

In June 2005 the American company OptiGen, which provides DNA based diagnostic tests for inherited diseases in dogs, announced a specific gene mutation test for the form of GPRA known as *prcd*-PRA (progressive rod-cone degeneration). This is eye blindness occurs in Labrador Retrievers & at least 12 other breeds. Previously only much less reliable marker gene test had been available. This new DNA test which can only be done from a blood sample can now be used in our breed with certainty. It identifies GENETICALLY NORMAL/CLEAR, CARRIER & AFFECTED dogs. The clinical signs of this PRA have a late age of onset & are only seen using an ophthalmoscope at approx. 3 to 5 years of age, by which time dogs have been used for breeding. Unfortunately some of our top show & field trial Labradors have turned out to be carriers, so we need to take care. The DNA blood test can be carried out at on young

puppies in a litter, so their genotype can be known at an early age. Dogs MUST be identified by Microchip or Tattoo and the vet who takes the blood sample must verify the ID.

The HSC would like to recommend to the BC that breeders consider using this DNA test in order to control / eliminate the recessive gene causing *prcd*-PRA blindness in the breed's gene pool. It would be especially useful if stud dogs were tested, the more (good!) Normal/Clear dogs to choose from the better for our breed! We do not want to lose good breeding stock.

We realise that this is still a new test & is based in USA. The cost to OptiGen for the test is approx £110 per single test. Other costs to take into account are vet fee for taking blood, microchipping and shipping costs. OptiGen runs a 20/20 club online system where a discount of 20% is applied for 20 or more samples sent in one batch. Extra saving can be made by having one vet taking all bloods & shipping all in one package.

OptiGen website is excellent: [www.optigen.com](http://www.optigen.com)

As a number of the HSC have experience in using the test they are happy to offer advice on home protocol, couriers, payments, vets, shipping etc. We hope to post a guidance leaflet on the main Labrador Club websites, LRC, MCLRC & LC Scotland. The leaflet will also be available from Club Secretaries.

The HSC discussed in detail the ethics & practicalities of using tested dogs. Janice Pritchard drew up the following table and it is offered as guidance only.

**Summary of OptiGen's latest Information on Incidence of *prcd*-PRA in Labrador Retrievers**

*(Based on the new accurate gene mutation test.)*

**Plus HSC Guidelines**

<b>NORMAL/CLEAR</b> (Formerly called Pattern A/A1)	<b>CARRIER</b> (Formerly called Pattern B/B1)	<b>AFFECTED</b> (Formerly called Pattern C/C1)
Genetically Normal. Will not develop this blindness, Will not pass it on.  Does not carry a recessive gene for the disease. Will get an Eye cert. Pass on examination.	Carries a recessive gene for <i>prcd</i> -PRA which is passed on. Will not develop this blindness. Can pass gene on to approx. 50% of offspring. Will get an Eye cert. Pass on examination. Could sire affected offspring.	Carries 2 recessive genes for <i>prcd</i> -PRA which are passed on. <b>Will develop this blindness.</b> All offspring will carry the gene. Will get an Eye cert. FAIL at some age. Could sire affected offspring.
<b>Incidence: 76 %</b>	<b>Incidence: 21 %</b>	<b>Incidence: 3 %</b>
<b>POSSIBLE BREED COUNCIL BREEDING GUIDELINES IN BRITAIN</b>		
Breed with Normal/Clear or Carrier or Untested dogs. Consider testing puppies when one parent is a carrier or untested.	Breed with NORMAL/CLEAR (Pattern A) dogs. Consider testing puppies.	Do not use for breeding. Over 2 generations of very controlled breeding progress could be made, but HSC question the desirability in the Labrador Retriever breed

*These guidelines will go to the 13 breed clubs via Breed Council for consultation & decision making at Labrador Breed Council meeting in April 2006.*

**Other recommendations**

- HSC felt very strongly that all Labradors (pups & adults) must have permanent ID prior to testing. (OptiGen essential for issue of certificate).
- HSC would like to recommend that all OptiGen *prcd*-PRA results for Labrador Retrievers are published in the quarterly KC Breed Records Supplement,

as with other DNA tests (Irish Setters - PRA rcd-1 & CLAD & English Springer Spaniels- Fucosidosis).  
HSC will ask *Dr. J. Sampson* at KC to help with advice on publication as needed.

### **THE KC ACCREDITED BREEDERS SCHEME (ABS)**

This is a new KC initiative. Most breed clubs have their own criteria in place for members' puppy registers.

- HSC pleased to see that BVA/KC Hip scoring & eye certification are essential.
- HSC had mixed views (Vote 3/3) on whether BVA/KC Elbow Grading (ED) should be an **essential or a recommended** requirement for the ABS. The HSC requests that the LBC vote on this in April 2006.  
Members should put their views to their Club secretary
- **The OptiGen Gene mutation test for prcd-PRA MUST be down graded to RECOMMENDATION.** The HSC is to write to KC to ask that this test be correctly defined in the ABS rules.

### **MICROCHIPPING**

HSC are all in favour of microchipping for ID and would like to encourage clubs to offer it as a service at shows. A number of the HSC are trained to implant chips & have experience on its use in puppies so are happy to offer advice. A list of qualified implanters will be circulated to Clubs.

**NARCOLEPSY & HAEMOPHILIA A** in Labrador Retrievers (agenda items from *Dr. Jeff Sampson* at KC). Due to shortage of time and very little information on these diseases available to the HSC at the meeting it was decided to defer discussion until April 06.

Note : OptiGen now offer DNA test for Narcolepsy