



BREEDERS PANEL NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2008

Can you believe winter is in the air? Since March 2008, a new Panel of Breeders committee was elected and a busy year lies ahead planning. We are planning at least two interesting events. Firstly, Dr Gareth Zeiler will be presenting a seminar on the topic of "The brood dam and the birth of the puppies" on 26 July 2008. Make sure that you do not miss out on this one! For those of you who are interested to learn more about the duties of a club secretary or how litter inspections are done, make sure to attend the training session that will be held on 22 June 2008. More information will be made available soon. A big thank you also goes to Dr Gareth Zeiler for his contribution on "Multiple brood dams on the same property - what to do and what not to do".

Who serves on the 2008/2009 committee?

Chairperson: Bridgitta Steyn

Secretary: Marinda Oosthuizen

Committee members: Chris Levings, Pam Zeiler, Helen Rennie

Please contact us for more information

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Heart certificates

A reminder to our breeders:

It is compulsory to submit a heart certificate when a female is bred from for the first time (that also applies to the sire). Thereafter, an annual heart certificate is strongly recommended.



Multiple brood dams on the same property

Do you have two or more pregnant dams on your property? If so you might want to follow these suggestions to give them the best chance at having a healthy litter:

1. If the Dams are going to whelp around the same time (within three weeks of each other) it is a good idea to separate them. The dam that whelps first will hopefully have a big litter and if her puppies wander off to the other dam about to whelp, it might encourage her to produce milk too early. This is not good for the following reasons:
 - The first milk that is produced is not "true" milk it is colostrum. Colostrum is milk that is very high in anti-bodies (part of the immune system that fights infection) from the mother. The first dam's puppies will get a very nice dose of maternal anti-bodies, but there will be none left for the second dam's puppies. This will mean that the second dam's puppies will not be equipped to fight infections that can kill them at a very young age.
 - It is rare, but if the colostrum from the second dam is of a different blood type to the first dam, there is a chance that the second dam's colostrum can attack the puppy's blood cells and kill them in that way.
 - The second dam will also be predisposed to getting "milk fever". This is when there is too little calcium in the mothers blood and can cause a severe illness that could kill her.
2. The first dam could cause the second dam to produce milk too early if she sees and hears the puppies, this will lead to a loss in colostrum and potentially put the dam at risk of getting "milk fever".
3. The sharing of puppies might cause tension between the dams, sometimes one dam may even start to reject her own puppies, this will put a lot of pressure on the other dam to feed and rear two litters.

There is nothing wrong with having more than one litter on one property at one time, as long as you have made provision to separate them in order to avoid the problems discussed above.

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BVSc



Hypothyroidism in Boxers

(Taken from: Purina Pro Club Boxer Update, Nestle Purina PetCare;

<http://americanboxerclub.org/purina3.html>)

A study at Michigan State University (MSU) indicates that Boxers are rated fifth highest among all breeds for autoimmune thyroid disease, a disorder that often progresses to hypothyroidism.

What is hypothyroidism?

While hypothyroidism is not considered life threatening, the quality of life for a dog suffering from hypothyroidism is substandard. The word hypothyroidism combines "hypo", which means lower than normal; "thyroid", the endocrine gland that produces various hormones; and "ism", which means behavior. Thus, "hypothyroidism" involves an inactive thyroid gland.

The thyroid gland produces two hormones called triiodothyronine (T3) and thyroxine (T4) that control the rate of metabolism. When the thyroid gland fails to function fully, if at all, it creates a systemic condition. The hormones, which are at a reduced level or nonexistent, fail to do their job of stimulating important physical and chemical processes at the cellular level.

Primary hypothyroidism has two main causes. One is autoimmune thyroiditis or inflammation of the thyroid gland. In this example, a dog's own antibodies attack and destroy thyroid cells in a typical autoimmune disease behavior. This condition of thyroiditis can exist for years without progressing. At other times, thyroiditis progresses and destroys the thyroid within just a few months. When there is little thyroid tissue left, a dog cannot make enough thyroid hormone and becomes hypothyroid.

Difficulty Diagnosing Hypothyroidism

Hypothyroidism can be difficult to diagnose. Many non-thyroid illnesses, such as fever, diabetes and almost any chronic debilitating condition, affect hormonal levels. These conditions are referred to as non-thyroidal illness (NTI) or euthyroid sick syndrome.



What may seem like signs of hypothyroidism may be caused by other conditions. Hair loss, for example, may be a sign of fleas, allergies or other problems. Hypothyroidism symptoms are usually gradual, and many dogs show no symptoms at all yet may be significantly affected. However, one study conducted between 2001, and 2002, found that many Boxers do show symptoms. Peter Graham, D.V.M., who leads the Canine Thyroid Health Study at MSU, notes that of 1,063 Boxers researched, signs of hypothyroidism were found as follows: 69% displayed alopecia or hair loss; 48% suffered from obesity or weight gain; 31% had hyperpigmentation; 18% had lethargy; 16% experienced pruritus or itchy skin; and 9% had flank alopecia.

Testing for Hypothyroidism

While a blood test can detect the disease before the appearance of clinical signs, a single negative blood test will not guarantee that a dog will never develop thyroid disease. A dog that is negative at 2 years old can still become positive at 6 years old.



Since the majority of dogs tested have a positive blood test by 4 years old, annual testing for the disorder is recommended for the first four years, followed by testing every other year until the age of 8 years.

Disease Progression

The veterinary profession is trying to understand why some dogs show clinical signs and low thyroid test results as early as 1 year old, while a littermate may take six or seven years or may never develop the disease. "What sets off the disease in those dogs that have the genetic makeup for promotion of the disease? Some speculate that vaccine protocols play a role, since it is an autoimmune disease. Diet may play a role as well. Studies have shown that an increased iodine in the diet result in earlier thyroid disease. "These factors appear to be worth studying, though other factors may be better understood as studies progress."

Important Steps for Breeders

While hypothyroidism takes a back seat to more life-threatening conditions such as cardiomyopathy, subaortic stenosis and cancer, it ranks high as a health concern on surveys that have been conducted over the years.

Breeders are encouraged to remember:

- Testing is the only way to determine if a dog is affected;
- Dogs that test normal as young dogs may be affected as they age; and;
- Hypothyroidism can affect every organ of the dog

It is a systemic condition and needs to be treated. Treatment for hypothyroidism usually involves the use of a hormone supplement prescribed by a veterinarian. L-thyroxine is most commonly used, and most dogs respond well to hormone supplementation.



Best wishes until the next newsletter,

**Breeders Panel
May 2008**