



Penn Veterinary Medicine

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Malcolm Jeffries, Treasurer and Webmaster
Wheaten Health Initiative
246 Lockoford Lane
Chesterfield, Derbyshire
S41 OTQ, United Kingdom

Dear Malcolm,

Thank you for your donation to help fund our summer helpers that are working in Dr. Paula Henthorn's laboratory with the DNA samples from sick and healthy Wheatens. The cheek swabs are pouring in from all directions, and we are getting important prevalence data concerning the variant alleles that we found associated with PLN. So far this summer we are seeing that about 1/2 of the samples are from dogs that are heterozygotes, that is, carrying 1 copy of the variant alleles that we found associated with PLN. About 1/3 are from homozygous negative (normal) dogs, carrying no copies, and about 1/6 of the samples are from dogs that are homozygous positive, carrying 2 copies of the variant alleles. It is this last group that are at highest risk for developing PLN themselves.

There are several helpful articles at www.scwtca.org/health/dnatest.htm, for instance, an abstract about the variant alleles we found associated with PLN, a step-by-step guide for getting cheek swabs, a submission form, and 37 questions and answers concerning how to interpret the test results. We are very happy that at last we can make available this DNA test that can be done on cheek swab samples and that the Wheaten community can identify individuals at highest risk for developing PLN as well as have a tool to carefully select mates for any dog, whether it is a carrier or not.

But of course there's much more work to do. After the prevalence study, we want to prospectively study the dogs whose test results are known so that we will know the real risk for dogs with 1 or 2 copies of the variant alleles. Retrospectively our data show that the dogs with 2 copies of the variant alleles are at highest risk, and the dogs with 1 copy are at intermediate risk, but it will be the prospective studies that help indicate whether the risk is 10, 20, 40, or 80 times higher, etc. We want to study if there are modifying protective genes in some dogs or environmental triggers that bring on disease. And we want to study the other genetic diseases in the breed, especially protein-losing enteropathy (PLE). Thank you so much for helping us toward these goals.

Please feel free to call upon me if you have any questions. The Wheaten community is amazingly supportive, and I'm glad that my career path just happened to lead me to you. Thanks again for all your support. Take care.

Sincerely yours,

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