

Wheaten Health Initiative - Newsletter Four

April, 2004

'To provide a platform for the reception and transmission of information about the health and well being of the Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier'

Our First Year:

WHI has achieved much in its first year of existence:

- * We were very proud to have welcomed Janet Petros, immediate past Health Chair of The SCWT Club of America, as our guest speaker who presented her Seminar to the Wheaten community in the UK. This Seminar was the first to concentrate on Protein Losing Syndromes.
- * We have introduced the Heska ERD test.
- * As a result there are dogs that have been diagnosed and are receiving treatment earlier than they might have been without WHI. Owners are receiving our continued support.
- * We count as our friends and colleagues people who share our principles and who will put personal ambitions to one side and act for the greater good of the breed.
- * We have organised a successful Silent Auction to raise funds to enable WHI to continue its programme of health education. We extend our thanks to the donors of the beautiful items and to all who took part in the auction.

Now onto our Second Year:

As WHI embarks on its second year, we are facing some changes in its composition: Barbara and Steve Bradford are finding that juggling business and personal commitments means that it is increasingly difficult for them to devote the time they feel is necessary to WHI activities. Also, Ann-Marie Grant is about to embark on an exciting new direction in her life, involving enrolling on a Degree course and taking on a challenging new role at work.

They are therefore taking a step back from active involvement in the day to day running of WHI but remain totally committed to the principles for which it was founded and have pledged their continued support in the future.

We wish to record our grateful appreciation of all the hard work and effort which Barbara, Steve and Ann-Marie have contributed over the past year. We couldn't have done it without you and we will miss your involvement but we know you are only a phone call away.

We wish you every success in your plans for the future.

WHI Agenda for 2004

- * Expand the open testing session programme using the ERD test.
- * Receive more input from Wheaten owners and breeders about matters they would like to see addressed by WHI.
- * Take every opportunity to learn more about maintaining the health of the SCWT.
- * Disseminate new and accurate information as quickly as possible to all

interested parties.

* Offer help and support to breeders and owners of dogs affected by hereditary disease.

* Watch this space for details of our next event!

Diagnosing Protein Losing Enteropathy (PLE) and Protein Losing Nephropathy (PLN):

Sadly, a number of Wheatens have been diagnosed over the past few months with the protein losing diseases, PLE and PLN; the dogs concerned, their owners and breeders are constantly in our thoughts and they can all be sure of our continued support. The Heska Early Renal Detection (ERD) test is now available to help with the diagnosis of PLN. WHI has tested a number of dogs and we hope to hold more Heska testing sessions in the near future.

In the meantime, Heska ERD is now available through your own Vet, via Leo Pharmaceuticals. This simple test can detect the loss of protein in the urine up to two years earlier than the conventional urine dipstick test would and, **crucially, before** the dog is **showing any physical signs of illness**.

PLE and PLN are not easy syndromes to diagnose as they can 'mimic' other diseases. It is so important that dogs are diagnosed correctly and in the early stages to ensure a better prognosis.

Diagnosis is through blood, urinalysis and in some cases an endoscopy or biopsy.

A Post Mortem, although preferable, is not a necessity. Below is an e-mail from Dr Littman to one of our members confirming this:

Meryl, Could you please either confirm or deny the truth of the following statement:
A post mortem is the only way of distinguishing between RD, PLN and other kidney problems.
Thanks in anticipation
Lynn

Dear Lynn,

Of course the post mortem or histopathology are very helpful, but the blood and urine tests along with history, possible radiographs or ultrasound, etc. are also very helpful. For instance, dogs with RD are generally younger, usually have a history of PU/PD (drinking more, urinating more, because they have a concentrating defect early on), have azotemia, but usually not hypoalbuminemia, and usually not that much protein in their urine. Kidneys may be smaller than normal and usually the course is chronic.

Dogs with PLN are usually slightly older, may be able to concentrate their urine even when they are a bit azotemic, have too much protein in their urine, they have hypoalbuminemia, and often hypercholesterolemia. Dogs with PLN may have a history of PLE or IBD. The PLN may come on acutely or be chronic and the kidneys may be normal in size, at least at first. Dogs with RD tend to have RD in their littermates/families, and PLN dogs tend to have PLE, PLN, or PLE/PLN in their family/relatives.

Of course there may be overlap of these diseases in some families, but usually not in my experience. Further confusion may exist because even post-mortem is not 100% for genetics

as a cause of the kidney lesion. RD can be caused by environmental problems during gestation or the first few weeks of life and PLN can be caused by tick-borne infections, heartworm, etc. If there is a question about infection such as pyelonephritis, Leptospirosis, ethylene glycol poisoning, etc., histopath may be useful, but there are other tests which might have helped more such as urine culture, serology, toxicology. Sometimes histopath isn't enough. We have a category on the Open Registry called "renal failure, incompletely diagnosed" - that is for animals that are relatively young (less than 8 yrs old or so) that had renal failure, but we didn't get enough information to know to say whether it was RD or PLN or something else.

We have guidelines as to how we make our diagnosis and those are listed at the bottom of the Open Registry. Do you have a copy? If not, let me know and I can send them to you. Although I agree that histopath is helpful, we would never have made as much headway in studying these diseases if we didn't have guidelines for making the diagnosis without a post-mortem, because so many owners do not want a necropsy performed. Take care. - Meryl

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What should you be doing for your Wheaten?

Take your vet a copy of the Information Sheet produced by WHI. This can be downloaded directly from the WHI website or contact any WHI member for a copy.

Your Wheaten is an important member of a unique Breed. Ideally, test your dog annually and send a copy of the test results to the breeder. Your participation in testing is not only in your dog's best interests - it will ensure the future health of the Breed.

What to do if your dog is diagnosed with one of the following:

If you have a dog whose health is causing you concern or which has been diagnosed with Renal Dysplasia (RD), PLE, PLN or Addison's Disease, it is important that you share this information. Please remember the WHI is always available to support you with help and advice on any health problem.

You should also contact the SCWT Club of GB Secretary, Mrs Judy Creswick on 01670 512832. The breeder of your dog needs to be informed too but if you feel you cannot do this then please make it clear to the Club Secretary and ask her to do so, on your behalf.

If you or your vet require any further information on these diseases, or the testing protocols then please visit the WHI Website or contact a member of the WHI group.

International Co-operation:

Since our last newsletter, WHI has received news of an exciting project instigated by the SCWT Club of America, Inc: - "The Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier Club of America Health Organization." The Wheaten Health Initiative was delighted to be among the first to be invited to take part in this new enterprise.

The purpose of the Health Organization is to increase activities in Wheaten Health, formalize the many health programmes and develop strategies for increased international cooperation in the exchange of health-related information.

The Club of America has nominated, Mrs Kayce Healy, to coordinate this on an international level. It is hoped that health issues, especially hereditary diseases can be tackled more effectively through greater global cooperation. Our liaison person is Sandra Jeffries.

By sharing our knowledge, skills and resources, we can hopefully move forward more quickly towards a solution to the diseases that affect our lovely breed. We will keep everyone informed of the progress of this new international group.

And finally

We are always willing to listen to your thoughts and ideas. We have an open door, so please, come and talk to us.

Quotable Quote: *"We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty."* Edward R. Murrow, report on Sen. McCarthy

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We would be grateful if all of those contacting us for more information can provide us with an electronic address (if possible) for future contact and dissemination of information

Recommended Web site: For more detailed information regarding health matters visit: www.scwtca.org