



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

NEWSLETTER

No. 6. March 2005

EDITORIAL

WHI is now in its third year. Since its inception in February 2003 the path has not been easy but we are gradually achieving our aims and going from strength to strength. We are very pleased to welcome Karen Francis and Lynne Witheyman who are now part of our enthusiastic team.

Genetics Seminar – 17th April 2005

The main speaker at this, our second seminar, is Dr. Neil O'Sullivan. Neil, who now lives in the USA, is a member of the SCWT Club of GB and has recently campaigned a British-bred Wheaten to Best of Breed at the prestigious Westminster Show in New York. The genetic information covered in this Seminar is applicable to all breeds and all are welcome.

Animal Health Trust

Lynn and Carole have been very active behind the scenes, and following a visit to the AHT last summer WHI have great news to impart via this Newsletter.

APDT Directory

I have just received the 2005 'Association of Pet Dog Trainers' Directory. This covers a wide range of subjects, i.e. Puppy, One-to-one, KC Good Citizens, Clicker, Nutrition advice, Home visits, and some cover pet bereavement counselling. Should anyone need any of these services I will be pleased to put them in touch with someone in their area. The Kennel Club Yearbook also lists accredited Ringcraft, Obedience and Agility classes throughout the country. Information from this is also available.

Whilst epilepsy does not appear to be a common occurrence in Wheatens (as far as I know), it seems that Scientists have tagged a gene suspected of causing epilepsy in dogs. See Website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4149179.stm>

Good news on Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA). A letter in Dog World 4th February, from Dr. N. G. Holmes and Dr. C. S. Mellersh, of the Animal Health Trust, states that the gene responsible for PRA has been identified at the A.H.T, and they have recently identified the mutation causing the disease. Using the information from this research, a DNA test has been developed. This test, which is available now, not only diagnoses dogs affected with this disease but can also detect those dogs which are carriers, showing no symptoms of the disease but producing affected pups. Further information can be obtained from www.aht.org.uk

Lost dogs: If your dog is picked up by the local dog warden there is no legal requirement for the warden to notify the police, some do, but others do not. Make sure your puppy owners know this and recommend that if their dog does go missing then the dog warden at their council offices must be the first call they make before the police.

Source - breed note columnist - Our Dogs 10.12.04

Copies of all Newsletters are available from our Website. Should you prefer hard copies I will be very pleased to send these to you on request.

Barbara

GENETICS SEMINAR

17th April 2005 at 10.00 am

The Warwick Suite, Sports Connexion
Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Coventry

Main Speaker -

Dr. Neil O'Sullivan

who will be focusing on the maintenance of a healthy canine population and making good breeding decisions.

Neil has a long association with the Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier in partnership with Gerard Thompson under the Geragold affix.

A broad range of topics, including an introduction to genetics for the dog breeder, will be covered, and an in depth knowledge is not required.

Jim Andrews – Unable to attend

who will demonstrate his computer database, a leading-edge tool for keeping pedigree information and monitoring hereditary health problems. **Hopefully, this demonstration will take place at a later date.**

Although the emphasis of this Seminar is on the Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier, the genetic information is applicable to all breeds.

£15 per person - to include buffet lunch & refreshments

For further details and a booking form, please contact

Malcolm Jeffries Tel:01246 554742 E-mail: sananmalc@aol.com

GREAT NEWS!

WHI has been very busy throughout last year working to achieve our aims and objectives with regard to raising the profile of Wheaten health. We are now delighted to report on the successful outcome of one of our projects.

Following a meeting last summer with specialists at the Animal Health Trust, they have agreed to process all tests for diagnosis or screening of Wheatens through their laboratory.

This means that wherever you live in the country, your vet will be able to dispatch samples, clearly marked with the Breed and pedigree name of your dog directly to the AHT. This will have immeasurable benefits for the breed long-term and for you and your vet.

- It will standardize results across the country and eliminate the differences which exist at present from one laboratory to another. It will standardize costs as the only variation between one owner's bill and another in a different part of the country will be in the cost the vet charges for his/her services.
- It will save your vet the time taken in finding a laboratory which is able to process the samples and explaining the relevance of the tests to them.
- It will save the frustration of having test results returned with important values missing.
You will have the security of knowing that the laboratory is fully aware of the procedures and the breed-specific need for them. You will be able to take advantage of referral on to experts at the AHT in the field of heritable diseases and their treatment, should the need arise.
- The test results will contribute towards building an ACCURATE picture of the health of our Breed across the country.
- When samples are accompanied by the relevant paperwork, the AHT will extract DNA, AT NO EXTRA COST TO YOU, and store it for future genetic research to identify the gene/s responsible
- You will have the security of knowing that all procedures will be subject to the same professional confidentiality which exists between vet and client.

PLEASE take advantage of this at your next visit to the vet. All the information about testing and the relevant forms you may need can be obtained either by a direct request to any WHI member or by visiting the WHI website at www.wheaten-health-initiative.co.uk

This is a real breakthrough but it needs your co-operation to make it work. Lynn Carter

(See also information about our new !FREE! Heska E.R.D.-HealthScreen™ offer)

Pedigree . . .

. . . 'the written record of a dog's ancestry'

INTERESTING WORD isn't it. To the novice it will mean only names, no mental picture, knowledge or experience with any of the dogs or bitches. Some will have the Champions in red ink in front of their names and others won't. Lots of red is good isn't it? In fact the more red the better, right?

Well, that's what we are led to believe. In point of fact sometimes it means the owners of those Champions have made a lot of effort, spent a lot of time and money to gain that title. A littermate may be just as good if not better. On the other hand the littermate may have a poor front, hideous movement, untypical skull, upright shoulder and faded pigment. One would never know by looking at the pedigree. This is then present in the Champion's blood.

By Don Wieden

So how informative is the record? Not very unless you know the line, the breeder and others in the litter. Sometimes a fluke (i.e. 'accident, stroke of luck, miracle . . .') can occur. This accident can produce a near perfect specimen in a litter of 'rubbish'. The fluke, perfect as it is, may never reproduce itself. So how important is that well known Champion in a pedigree? Not at all in reality.

The 'pedigree' of breeders is of the utmost importance, lest we forget. Are these individuals straight forward in talking about the positives and negatives in their line and the breed? Are they helpful and not just bashing fellow breeders? Is testing being done for various health problems? A conscientious breeder will take back anything they have bred. If sold for show and is not up to scratch, would he/she replace the puppy without question and hassle?

The pedigree itself is a paper of trust. It may look and be 'official' and these days we must accept that. After all these years in pure bred dogs, I know some pedigrees aren't worth the paper they're printed on. Until DNA testing is done, on all pure bred animals, we can never be positive. As I've said before this is a game of trust.

How much is hidden in a pedigree? For example that well known Champion may have died young, may have developed health problems that are never revealed. The novice may breed into that line without ever knowing they're breeding into short lived, aggression, immune or endless problems that are kept secret. What of the new owner only wanting a pet? They may get a pedigree and a lot more along with it!

More important, than the fancy pedigree, is the honest breeder. The breeder that faces reality and strives to perfect their breed in every way. It's a great challenge and most important is the knowledge that has been gathered over many years. Here is where longevity pays off. To know all about most of the dogs in a five, six and seven generation pedigree is priceless.

When you come to think of it, isn't Pedigree a strange word?

*Reproduced by kind permission of the Editor, 'Our Dogs'
Sadly Don Wieden passed away shortly after this was written.*

Editor's Note: The various notes for other breeds in the dog press can be both very interesting and indeed, very enlightening. After typing the foregoing I came across a piece in an old 'Our Dogs' breed notes in which the writer said she had seen many pedigrees with names of Champions printed in red and heavily underlined with CCs and RCCs

listed, but had never seen a pedigree carrying details of any major health problems which have occurred. In rare cases, details may be given of dogs with low hip scores, as if this was the only feature of the dog, which really mattered. She felt it was time that any problems which have occurred in a kennels bloodlines should be listed on pedigrees. Knowing where these problems are should help honest breeders to avoid them, and hopefully, eliminate them from all bloodlines. . . .*If only!*

FREE Heska E.R.D.-HealthScreen™ TEST KITS

WHI is committed to the principle of regular and repeated testing of Wheatens in order to identify health problems at the earliest opportunity.

We have put strategies into place to raise the awareness of SCWT health issues with both owners and their vets. The British Small Animal Veterinary Association now carries links to our information on its website and, at the suggestion of Dr. Jeff Sampson, the KC Genetics Co-ordinator, we have produced charts of the heritable diseases of the SCWT, their symptoms and diagnoses, for the use of vets and owners.

We are aware that there are many vets who are still unaware of this test or who are reluctant to buy a whole batch of 10 kits. As part of our continuing education programme we have decided to offer **FREE Heska E.R.D.-HealthScreen™ test kits**, for a **limited period**, to encourage the use of this test by your veterinary practice.

To qualify for this offer all you have to do is enquire whether your vet is offering this test. If they are not, but they do have a refractometer to enable them to test the specific gravity of your dog's urine, ask them if they would be prepared to try the test if you brought one in for their use.

When you contact us you will receive a complete pack of health information for you and your vet, including information from Heska on administering the test, instructions for the collection of urine sample and a **FREE** test kit. (You will, of course, have to pay the vet's fees for carrying out the procedure).

We have found that once vets have used the test, they realize its potential with all breeds, not only Wheatens.

REMEMBER this is a **LIMITED OFFER** available on a **"first come - first served"** basis. Contact us quickly if you would like to take advantage of it.

RISK, RAW FEEDING AND PATHOGENS: A REVIEW

By Stacy Pober

Assessing the potential risk involved in feeding dogs raw meat is complicated. Some of the issues I'd like to discuss are assessing the potential risk of to the dogs, assessing the risk to humans who are around raw-fed dogs, and the general issue of how to evaluate risks. References are in parentheses, and a list of sources can be found at the end of this article, with short excerpts and web links to full-text or author's abstracts in most cases.

(Editor's note: As we do not have enough space to include the references and list of sources, this article, together with these details, can be obtained on request)

RISK TO DOGS

First, the issue of risk in feeding a raw diet is not simple. ALL foods have some degree of risk, so the question isn't whether risk exists. The question is whether the risk is unacceptable. You may think you want zero risk - but that's not a choice you get in life, because all foods carry some type of risk. Raw meat can indeed be contaminated with e.coli O157, camphylobacter, or other pathogens.

However, kibble can also contain diseases-causing mold and other pathogens. Studies by Bueno (2001), Gunsen (2002), and Maia (2002) found aflatoxin, a toxic mold, in pet food samples. Aflatoxin contamination of dog kibble resulted in approximately 25 dog deaths in 1998 (Texas) and vomitoxin was found in batches of Nature's Recepte kibble in 1995 (FDA Enforcement Report). At least seven dogs have died from unknown contamination of Petcurean pet food, recalled by the manufacturer in October 2003 (Syufy, 2003).

Bacteria and mold are not the only risks involved in choosing a food for your pet. For example, there is some research that says that small particle size of food is a risk factor in bloat, so with regard to bloat, feeding large meaty bones would be less risky than feeding any kibble (Theyse, 1998). Even the packaging of commercial food can carry some risk, as one study of canned pet foods showed that Bisphenol A, an industrial chemical and suspected endocrine disruptor leached from the cans into the food (Kang, 2002).

Dogs are more resistant to most of the common raw meat pathogens than are humans. (Consider the fact that many dogs use the kitty litter box as a snack tray without ill effects. Does anyone really want to argue that cat feces are free of pathogens? Dogs are resistant - NOT immune - from the disease potential of these pathogens, and healthy dogs can harbor them without symptoms. Beutin (1993) found verotoxin producing e. coli in 4.6% of apparently health dogs and Dahlinger (1997) cultured various types of bacteria, including some forms of e. coli and salmonella from the lymph nodes of 52% of apparently healthy dogs brought in for elective spays. Most dogs can eat clean raw meat without a problem, even if th same raw meat would make humans very sick.

Still, a dog with a compromised immune system or digestive system is going to be more at risk for illness from any infectious agent than a dog who is healthy. So I would be reluctant to feed raw meat to an ill dog, a very young puppy, or a very elderly dog who has not previously been fed a raw diet.

I recently posted an article to the VETMED list about KSU's studies on Alabama Rot (a/k/a hemolytic uremic syndrome) in Greyhounds fed raw meat. (Greyhounds, 1995) some people immediately posted "atta girl" posts to me privately. While I have no doubts about the accuracy of the KSU research, I think most of the readers of VETMED are unaware of exactly what kind of raw meat is fed to racing greyhounds.

Racing greyhounds are routinely fed raw "4-D meat" as part of their diet. 4-D meat is unfit for human consumption because the source of it is animals that died of natural causes (not via normal slaughter procedures) and includes animals which were diseased, or dying when they went into the slaughterhouse. This is meat which has either not been inspected by the USDA or it failed the inspection. This is not the quality of meat most pet owners buy if they are feeding their pets raw meat. 4-D meat is very foul stuff, and has the potential to contain much more in the way of pathogens than the meat that you buy in the

supermarket. I would never feed a dog raw 4-D meat.

I don't know of any published veterinary reports of Alabama Rot in pet dogs fed raw diets from USDA-inspected meat. It is, unfortunately, mainly a problem caused specifically by the feeding of unwholesome raw 4-D meat - not raw meat generally.

But raw meat is not alone in having bacterial contamination problems. There are case reports of pathogens found in commercially produced dog food and in dog treats such as rawhide, pig ears, jerky, and chew hooves. (Human, 2000, as well as Clark et al, 2001; White et al. 2003; Bren 2000; HHS News, 2000, Canadian Food Inspection Agency 1999 and 2000). According to the FDA, "all pet chew products of this type may pose a risk" (HHS News, 1999).

So, my personal opinion is that with regard to the dog's health, feeding USDA graded raw meat to dogs is a reasonable choice for some owners to make as long as precautions are taken to avoid excess risk (for example, don't let the meat sit around at room temperature before giving it to the dog.)

RISK TO HUMANS

Studies of pet dogs have shown e. coli 0157 and salmonella in the feces of pet dogs - but most of these studies were not limited to dogs fed raw diets. So, kibble fed dogs and dogs fed rawhides, pig ears, and chew hooves also carry this risk.

However, before getting too fixated on dogs as a source of pathogens for humans, consider that the most notorious cases of food poisoning have been caused by poor hygiene from human sources - such as cooks and farmers.

While undercooked and raw meat is sometimes implicated in food poisoning cases, there have been an enormous number of cases of salmonella and e. coli from fruits and vegetables. The seemingly innocuous bean sprout has been linked to many outbreaks of food poisoning, as have melons, salads, and apple cider (Health Canada, 2002, and USDA 1995). In other words, while raw meat is a risk, so is almost ANY uncooked food that you eat. There has been one salmonella outbreak linked to almonds. (Chan et al. 2002).

So, are people at additional risk of getting pathogens from coming in contact with a dog fed raw meat? There isn't a lot of research that is directly on topic for this. There are studies of raw-fed dogs (Joffe and Schlesinger, 2002) but these do not carefully compare the raw fed dogs to a similar population fed commercial dog food. (See the commentary on Joffe's study by New n.d.).

I have seen studies of pet dogs that show that food-borne pathogens were present in a surprisingly large proportion of the dogs tested. Hackett and Lappin (2003) found infectious agents in the feces of 26% of healthy Colorado dogs. As far as I can tell, this study was NOT limited to dogs eating raw diets. Fukata et al (2002) found salmonella antibodies in 15% of apparently healthy dogs.

I think that you can reduce any potential risk of food poisoning related to dogs by simply having good hygiene - scrupulously washing your hands after cleaning up after your dog and washing up thoroughly before eating. Keeping the dog itself clean probably doesn't hurt, either. And it would make sense to avoid letting your dog lick you right after eating a chicken neck. For these reasons, I think that someone with pets and toddlers might want to avoid raw diets because small children will not follow the above rules. Kids often will let the dog lick their face any old time, and they may even try to taste the dog's meals. (Sato et al. 2000).

RISK ASSESSMENT

Aside from the concept of 'relative risk' there is the question of risk versus benefit. If people were completely happy with the health of dogs from kibble feeding, the entire "raw foods" movement would have never taken root. There's nothing more convenient than pouring kibble into a dish. So some people must be seeing a benefit from feeding raw.

I think that most veterinarians' assessment of risk from raw diets is skewed by the fact that normal, healthy dogs are not generally seen by vets, and that most nutrition research is done using commercial diets. If there is a large population of totally healthy dogs eating raw diets, they may never be noticed by a veterinarian. On the other hand, vets will usually see the dogs who got the 3-day old chicken bones from the garbage can, or the one whose owner misguidedly thought it was a good idea to give their dog the skin and bones from their holiday turkey.

Raw diets do carry risk. These can be reduced by feeding the freshest cleanest meat the owner can buy and following all the rules about temperature, storage and hygiene (FSIS, 1999).

Kibble diets and dog treats also carry risk - and these can be reduced by buying fresh and high-quality food, rather than the cheapest stuff available, and by following proper storage and hygiene rules. But it's worth noting that some of the priciest brands of kibble were recalled because of toxic contamination, so a high price does not ensure safety.

I don't think there is one right way to feed dogs. I think that careful attention to nutrition and hygiene reduce the risk associated with whatever feeding regimen you choose. It's interesting to note that feeding raw meat is intensely controversial, while feeding pig ears and jerky - which carry similar if not higher risks for contamination - is widely accepted as reasonably safe.

Incidentally, in case anyone is wondering, the main diet for my dogs is free-fed kibble. I free feed because it helps prevent gluttony, and I have never had a case of bloat in Greyhounds, which are a somewhat bloat-prone breed. I also routinely feed my dogs raw chicken parts. I feed bony chicken parts because I have found this to be the most effective way of keeping my dogs' teeth clean. I haven't noticed any other big change in their health, but they love the chicken parts and their teeth are clean and their breath sweet as a result. Greyhounds are notorious for foul teeth as they age, but even my oldest dog has remarkably clean teeth.

With regard to the risk, I can only share my experience, in that I've not seen any illnesses in the dogs I can attribute to the raw meat nor to the kibble. I made my choice because I know of more pet greyhounds that have died from the anesthesia involved in teeth cleaning and other elective surgeries than have died from eating a raw diet.

I wrote this article to seriously examine the question a VETMED subscriber asked about the potential for risk when using raw-fed dogs as therapy dogs. As long as the dogs aren't fed raw meat during therapy sessions, I don't see a problem. While these dogs may carry pathogens, so may dogs fed kibble or pig ears, or rawhide. One survey found salmonella contamination of 41% of the dog treats examined. (White et al, 2003). Accordingly, it would not be logical or fair to bar raw fed dogs from a therapy dog program, unless you are also barring all dogs who are fed pig ears, rawhides, and other similar treats.

REFERENCES: As pointed out at the beginning of this article, the full list, together with the foregoing article, can be obtained by contacting the editor.

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(This article appeared in 'Benchmarks' March 2004)

WHEATEN WORLD

Once upon a time there was a beautiful world. It was made up of a string of islands. The islands were covered with beautiful plants and trees and were as green as shamrocks and set in oceans of azure blue.

The people who were fortunate enough to live in this beautiful world were blessed in every way, but the most special blessing of all was that their world was shared by an extraordinary type of dog found nowhere else in the universe. The dogs' coats were soft and gently waved like the sea as it broke on the shore, and the colour of the coat was the pure gold of sunshine or a good crop ripening in the summer sun. So it was that the people gave this type of dog its name – they called it a Wheaten.

People and Wheatens travelled freely all over this amazing world, for every island was linked to another by bridges built by their ancestors in ancient times. The Wheatens especially were great travellers and loved to go and meet their friends on other islands.

One day a terrible catastrophe happened which set in motion a dreadful chain of events. A large group of Wheatens were moving from one island to another when the bridge they were crossing broke and all on it fell into the sea and were lost. The people were distraught and began to seek around the world for someone to build a new bridge and it was only then that they realised the skill of bridge-building had long been lost; no-one was left alive to tell them what to do.

One by one more of the ancient bridges fell into the sea and took with them many Wheatens. Panic set in as the people desperately searched for an answer.

Some of the people decided that they could not risk losing any more of their beloved companions and took axes and saws and destroyed the bridges that were left on their islands. "You are safe now," they said to their Wheatens, "we will protect you."

But the Wheatens missed their travels and pined for their friends and one by one they sickened and died.

Some people turned to their greatest statesmen for help. "We will draw up plans and build new bridges," said the statesmen. But every time they tried to make a plan, they would disagree about the best way to proceed and the plan would come to nothing.

It seemed as though there was no solution and that a day would come when there would be no more Wheatens and they would only live in the stories told by grandparents at the fireside, until one day something began to happen.

On some of the islands groups of people began to chop down trees and saw the timber and they started to build new bridges. Often they failed and the bridge would be too rickety and would break. Sometimes others would stand watching and laugh scornfully at their efforts, but each time the bridge-builders failed they learned something new, and each time they tried again the bridges became better and stronger.

These people began to travel across the new bridges and teach others how to build. Sometimes people were afraid of these new ideas. "What will stop this new bridge falling again one day and taking our

wonderful dogs with it?" they asked. But the bridge-builders told them, "We won't let it happen again because we have learned not to take anything for granted. From now on every bridge will be inspected regularly so that we will see if there is a problem and we will share our knowledge and skills."

And so it was that after many, many years the islands were all linked once more and Wheatens were travelling happily from one place to another in safety. But there were still people who were unhappy.

One day a group of them travelled to the King's palace to ask for his help. They explained that the reason they were sad was that so many Wheatens had died needlessly. The King thought for a while and then he sent out a proclamation. One more bridge was to be built but this was to be a bridge like no other. It was to be made by the finest craftsmen, out of pure silver, and it would be a memorial to all the Wheatens who had been lost.

For many months the work went on and finally the bridge was finished. All the people and their Wheatens came from around the world for the opening of the bridge and to remember the Wheatens that were lost. They gazed at the structure in open-mouthed awe. It rose from the ground, arching into the sky like a soaring silver bird. It was so vast its end was lost among the clouds.

The crowd fell silent and just then the sun broke through the clouds and lit the silver structure. Colours of every hue, reflecting from the silver surface, flashed into the sky.

A small boy pointed upwards, "Look mummy, it's a rainbow." So it was that the bridge was named, and for ever after the Rainbow Bridge stood as a reminder of what could happen if the people ever became neglectful again.

© Lynn Carter 30/03/04

Do you want to be a bridge-builder? If you have enjoyed this story please make a donation to any Wheaten Health project. You may also send the story on to someone else but please respect the principle which underpins this strategy by including this message.

This story is dedicated to all those around the world who set aside disagreements and personal conflicts and work together for Wheaten health.

MONTGOMERY TAPES

Following on from the SCWT Health Conference at Keystone in Colorado, May 2003, which three members of WHI attended, a Health Forum was held at the Montgomery weekend in October that year with some of the speakers. A set of five tapes, covering the talks by Dr. Wendy Beers DVM, Dr. Meryl Littman VMD, DACVIM, Dr. Shelly Vaden DVM, DACVIM and Dr. David Williams, with a Panel Discussion, is available on loan to those of you who would like to learn more about the hereditary health problems that can affect the breed. There is also a book to accompany these tapes.

Please contact WHI to arrange collection.

A first in the UK for Artificial Insemination in the breed.

Sandra and Malcolm Jeffries' *Sanzerena Sweet N Sassy (Tilly)*, who lives with Rachel and Gareth Attridge in the West Country, produced a litter of 5 dogs by A.I on the 21st January. The sire is *US Ch.Wheaten Rebels Wolfe Tone (Tibbs)*. Congratulations to all.

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Web site: www.wheaten-health-initiative.co.uk

MEDICAL TERMS – Questions & Answers

Copies of this comprehensive guide can be obtained at a cost of £2.50 + 50p p&p from Barbara.

We would be grateful if all of those contacting us for more information can provide 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

“Support is a Phone Call away”

Should you ever find yourself facing a serious health problem, or any problem with your Wheaten, there are experienced, caring, people at the end of a telephone who will share their knowledge with you, and who will do their utmost to ensure that you have all the information you need to make informed decisions.

“The best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing”.

Theodore Roosevelt

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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.