



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. 8. July/August 2005

EDITORIAL

I would like to welcome all of you who have registered your interest in WHI by becoming members and to thank all those who have sent a donation to help in our education programme. If you have not already joined the group, please consider becoming a member to ensure receiving future copies of the Newsletter. There is no charge for membership, but donations, however small, are always welcome. See page 5 for details.

There is good news from the Animal Health Trust who will be prepared to perform a Post Mortem on Wheatens when necessary. Further details on page 3. This information is included in the WHI information pack for owners and Vets "SCWT Breed Specific Health Services available at the Animal Health Trust".

I am also pleased to report that the uptake on the free Heska kit offer in the previous Newsletter resulted in all the available kits being used. Should anyone require more details for themselves and their vet on the Heska test, WHI will be pleased to supply this information.

I have recently joined the Veterinary Nursing Association as a supporter member and will receive their monthly magazine. This will assist the group to keep abreast of new products and information that could help us all.

We have heard of two instances recently where young puppies were found to have crystals in the urine. Crystals can be found in the urine of older dogs but not usually in puppies. Has anyone ever encountered this? If so we would be interested to have information of the treatment and/or feeding regime both before and after treatment.

Suzi Jacobs has sent an update on Megan (see Page 3). Some of you will have read about Megan in Newsletter 5, November 2004. I am very pleased to note that she is doing so well.

Pat Symons sent in a very disturbing cutting from the Sunday Times, 12th June, in which it is stated that one in every 100 dogs on flights fail to make it alive. A source from one American carrier said 'Technical delays are the real killer'. One dog had been stuck on the tarmac in a blizzard in Vancouver. Other hazards are container crushes and hot loading areas. If only dogs could travel on board with their owners and not be sent as cargo!

Pat also refers to our previous newsletter regarding pain. She says she knew without question that her Wheaten was in pain from having half her body shaved for a back operation as her skin was so sensitive and on fire to touch. The vet apparently did not seem to take that into consideration.

It is nearing the end of summer now and most of you have probably had your holiday. However, should you be away with your Wheatens somewhere new to you it is advisable to make sure you have prior knowledge of the area in which you plan to walk. To find out where and when you can and cannot go, access – www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk taking care to follow advice and local signs. **As a an extra precaution when on holiday or away from home, fit a disc to your dog's collar giving your temporary address and/or mobile phone number.**

If there are any issues you would like to see raised in the Newsletters, please let me know. Copies of all Newsletters are available from our Website, but should you prefer hard copies I will be very pleased to send these on request.

Barbara 0117 9324297

Email – penney@btinternet.com



The Quest for Improved Testing Facilities and The Animal Health Trust

In the last newsletter WHI announced what we felt was a great stride forward in the facilities available to Wheaten owners and breeders, by reaching an agreement with the Animal Health Trust to process all health-screening tests on Wheatens through its laboratories.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you can read how this arrangement has now been extended to include Post Mortem procedures – another extremely important breakthrough, however, with the formalisation of our membership list we want everyone to feel more involved with the workings of our organisation and thought it might be of interest to our members to know the background to these events.

In the summer of 2004 one of the founder members of WHI was contacted by a Wheaten owner who had heard that an eight-year old male Wheaten, which had been sired by a dog owned by them, had been diagnosed as having PLE and was the subject of an article in "The Veterinary Record".

Naturally the owner was extremely distressed but determined to act in a responsible way. We did our best to provide support and answer the questions the owner put to us and within a matter of days, with the owners' help, WHI had contacted the breeder of the affected dog, who was also eager to help and gave permission to use the pedigree information in any way which might aid the prevention of such diseases in the future".

The dog which features in this article has an 'Irish' mother and an 'English' father but his ancestry is the same sort of "genetic cocktail" that all Wheatens have. As the mode of inheritance of PLE and PLN is not yet known, it is not possible to pinpoint which of this dog's

ancestors might have been involved in passing on the deleterious gene/s if indeed it is the hereditary form of the disease and without further genetic studies even this remains unclear.

The article: "Protein-Losing Enteropathy in a Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier in the United Kingdom" by authors: S W. Melville-Walker; K C. Smith; C M. Elwood published in "The Veterinary Record" Number 14, 3 April 2004, pp. 440-441, is summarised below with the kind permission of Kathryn Clarke, Deputy Editor. The article can be read in full either by obtaining a hard copy of the relevant issue or electronically on the Ingenta website: <http://www.ingentaconnect.com>

One of the key elements that concerned us greatly was that the authors believed this to be the first diagnosed case in the UK.

This fact we knew to be incorrect but it illustrated graphically the apparent lack of information about the incidence of potentially hereditary diseases in the SCWT in this country, even within the Veterinary profession.

One of the authors of the article was Mr. Ken Smith, Head of Pathology at the AHT. WHI contacted him and following a productive exchange of ideas a meeting was arranged between two members of WHI and Cathryn Mellersh, a geneticist at the AHT.

From this meeting, agreement was reached in principle that the AHT would help in the diagnosis of hereditary disease in the Wheaten. At this time WHI was also able to play an active role in establishing links between the AHT and the research teams working in the USA under Dr Meryl Littman with a view to cooperation in future genetic research.

All of this was made possible by the honesty of the owners of the sire and dam of the affected dog. Without their genuine care for the future of our Breed we would not have had this unique opportunity. I can only imagine how difficult it was for them but I hope I would find the courage to do as they did if the need arose.

Summary of the article from *The Veterinary Record*:

"Protein-Losing Enteropathy in a Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier in the United Kingdom"

Authors: S W. Melville-Walker; K C. Smith; C M. Elwood

The authors begin by describing a brief medical history of the dog: "An eight-year-old neutered male soft-coated wheaten terrier was referred for investigation of chronic diarrhoea. The dog had a three month history of diarrhoea and occasional vomiting, and was described by the owners as always having had a 'weak stomach'." The dog was described as being in "good body condition" scoring 3 on a scale of 1-5 and weighing 21 kg.

The authors also refer to the history of the identification of PLE mentioning several breeds which are predisposed to the disease and research in the USA which "...has described a familial syndrome of PLE in soft-coated wheaten terriers (Littman and others 2000), which occurs alone or in combination with protein-losing nephropathy (PLN). Clinical signs occur in middle age and include diarrhoea, vomiting, anorexia, weight loss, cavity effusion and polyuria/polydipsia. Histological examination of intestinal biopsy samples from affected dogs revealed inflammatory bowel disease,

lymphangiectasia, or both in 92 per cent of the dogs. A common male ancestor was identified in 188 of the 222 dogs...."

The article goes on to describe the clinical investigations carried out on the dog, including urinalysis which revealed a specific gravity of 1.028 and no detectable protein in a dipstick test. There is no indication whether this test was a traditional dipstick test or the newer early detection type, but the absence of protein in the urine in this case would not have been remarkable as PLE causes the loss of protein into the faeces rather the urine, which would be indicative of PLN.

However, "...ultrasonographic examination of the abdomen revealed diffuse small intestinal mucosal thickening with unusual areas of more marked focal, discrete thickening..." This finding resulted in further investigation by biopsies of the intestine and the dog was placed on an exclusion diet pending results.

The detailed report of the findings from the biopsies which follows describes many of the classic indicators of PLE and leads the authors to conclude, "The present case has many similarities to dogs included in a large series of 222 affected dogs in the USA (Littman and others 2000)", which the authors then go on to explain in greater depth.

At this point the article details the treatment of the affected dog with prednisolone and goes on to report that, "Five months later the owners reported that the dog was doing well and had gained 2kg in weight with concurrent reduction in clinical signs."

The authors state that "Unfortunately in this case it was not possible to trace the dog's ancestry and information on siblings was unavailable. Pedigree analysis in the study in the USA revealed the close relationships between affected dogs and therefore led to the hypothesis that familial protein-losing diseases in soft-coated wheaten terriers may be due to defects in genes affecting the immune system in the gut and kidney."

Furthermore, "It is noted that soft-coated wheaten terriers may be predisposed to hypersensitivities or immune-mediated diseases, including food allergy dermatitis (Rosser 1993). The dog in this case had suffered from skin problems (Malassezia dermatitis) and 15 per cent of dogs in the study in the USA had a history of skin disease (Littman and others 2000)."

The authors go on to refer to research on food hypersensitivity conducted by Dr. Vaden in the USA but state that "The owners of the dog in this present case did not want more extensive investigation of dietary triggers, as they were happy to maintain the dog on the proprietary exclusion diet and low-dose prednisolone." and, "Whether the dog in this case eventually develops PLN remains to be seen."

They conclude by saying, "This case shows many similarities to the cases described in the USA and is the first to be reported in the UK. Whether it is an isolated case or indicates the presence of the hereditary disease in soft-coated wheaten terriers in the UK requires further study and pedigree examination of any other affected dogs."

It was this last paragraph which really hit home. We know this is not the first case of PLE (or indeed PLN) in this country. How many more "isolated" cases must there be? There are those who believe this cannot happen to them – that the "problems" lie in other lines. The small gene pool of the early history of the breed and the fact

that all Wheatens world-wide are descended from a handful of dogs as recently as the 1930s means that all problems must be regarded and investigated from a global perspective.

Until there is a concerted effort on the part of ALL breeders of Soft-Coated Wheatens in this country to face their responsibilities, educate the owners of their puppies, monitor the health of all Wheatens properly and be open and honest about the results, whether good or bad, we cannot know what the true health status of the Breed in this country is and we cannot make any progress in finding a genetic solution to the problems we face. Until then we will continue to hear of "isolated cases", whose background cannot be properly investigated.

We have the opportunity to make a difference – do we have the courage?

Lynn Carter for WHI

- **Would you like a better understanding of the terms used in the article?**
- **Would you like to learn more about PLE and PLN?**
- **Would you like information about submitting samples to the AHT for testing?**
- **Would you like to know how you can store DNA from your dog to aid in the hunt for a genetic solution to heritable diseases in our Breed.**

WHI has produced a number of publications which can help (details below). We also have a set of cassette tapes, each featuring one of the experts involved in research in the USA which are available on loan.

For further details contact :

Barbara Penney: 01179 324297 E-mail – penney@btinternet.com

Some of the Materials available from WHI

Medical Terms – Questions & Answers Pack

AHT Pack for Owners and Vets

Audio Cassette Tapes of the Montgomery Health Conference, featuring Dr Meryl Littman, Dr Shelley Vaden and others.

(See Page 5 for full details)

POST MORTEM PROTOCOL:

No dog owner likes to contemplate the necessity for Post Mortem. However, we should all be aware of what to do should the need arise. WHI have had very productive conversations with Mr Ken Smith, who is Head of Pathology at AHT. We are pleased to announce that the AHT is prepared to perform a Post Mortem on Wheaten Terriers should the need arise. It would be a general PM to establish the cause of death with particular reference to the kidney and intestine. DNA will also be collected on PM (if it has not already been previously stored).

Post Mortem needs to take place within 48 hours of death or euthanasia. If this occurs over a weekend then the body should be refrigerated (not frozen), and sent to the AHT early on the Monday morning. A letter from the dog's veterinary surgeon to summarise the clinical history leading up to death or euthanasia should be sent with the body.

Alternatively, selected tissues, as guided by the referring veterinary surgeon, may be sent if a whole body post mortem is not deemed necessary.

It is important that the request for pathological examination comes from the referring veterinary surgeon, as the post mortem report must go to the referring veterinary practice, who would then relay those results to the owners.

The contact number for all these investigations is:

Telephone: **08700 502426**; Fax: 08700 502461 or e-mail diagnostics@ah.org.uk

Vicky, Kay or Mahala, in the diagnostics office will be able to give referring veterinary surgeon's detailed advice on a case by case basis, (submission of the whole body or parts thereof).

UPDATE ON MEGAN

Megan was diagnosed in February 2004 with PLE, so we are now 18 months on...

She is the picture of health, has a new zest for life and weighed in this week at almost 17 kilos which was her average weight before she was diagnosed! She has maintained around this weight since coming off the steroids some months ago.

About 6 months ago, we had a small scare, as she started having diarrhoea and I immediately jumped to the conclusion that we were in trouble again.

Unfortunately, the wonderful vet who had originally treated her had moved on from the surgery and the main Vet had not been too familiar with her treatment. He immediately put her on antibiotics in the hope that it was just a bug. After 4 days, things had not really improved much, and I asked him to take blood tests (not sure why he did not do this in the first place!) The blood tests fortunately proved that she was not losing protein, although as a precaution and so as not to take any chances, he put her on a mild dose of steroids.

Megan was soon back to fine health and we have put that one down to a 'tummy bug', although that could very easily have gone the other way. With my other dogs I would have starved them and fed fish and rice, however, I did not delay with Megan, it was straight to the Vet.

Recently Megan had a couple of tumours on her muzzle and neck which have been removed by laser and everything is fine, but she did have a general anaesthetic and responded absolutely normally.

Incidentally, she does have a 'wax build up' problem in her ears and I am not sure if this could be related to her condition (the vet is not sure either), so we have to vigilantly clean her ears and keep a close watch on them as they do get sore.

Megan is now 7 years old and seems to be going strong, I had heard that if they can survive the first 5 months then there is a good chance they will get through. We are well beyond that now, and I am so happy that we get this extended time with her, Although we have 3 dogs in the house, she is definitely our 'special' little girl.

We are just lucky, although we did get excellent treatment and early diagnosis. Of course for some little dogs this may not be enough, so treasure every moment and my thoughts are with anyone who is suffering the uncertainty and worry that this condition brings.

All the best....

Suzi Jacobs

Editor's note: Suzi tells me that she has been communicating with a Wheaten owner in America who, on reading the original article on

Megan in Newsletter 5, contacted Suzi for advice. Suzi says "It looks like we have given her some extra time with her Wheatie, this is thanks to you and all at WHI".

NEWS REPORTS & INFORMATION

Safe and Sound

The Kennel Club started a project in 2003 aimed at schools and children called 'Safe and Sound' which shows children how to interact with dogs safely. An interactive CD takes the children through everyday situations with their dog and asks them to choose which is the right reaction to the situation. If they get it right the programme even prints out a certificate for them at the end. It may be a good idea to advise prospective Wheatie owners with children of this CD when they purchase a puppy.

Dog Theft

Dog theft is now totalling 40,000 dogs a year in the UK. www.doglost.co.uk not only advertise the theft but enables those looking at it to download a poster to put up in their area. They will also fax this poster to up to 200 vets, pet shops, dog wardens and animal rescue centres within 30 miles of your Post Code. E-mail: Admin@Doglost.co.uk Phone – 01909 733366

Substances poisonous to dogs

Raisins and grapes can be highly toxic to dogs. **Sultanas** too must now be included.

A list of poisonous plants including details of potentially poisonous garden and household substances as supplied by the Veterinary Poisons Information Service, is available free from the Dogs Trust, Tel: 0207 8370006, or you can download the list from their website – www.dogstrust.org.uk

Cocoa Mulch

Do not use cocoa mulch sold at garden centres and DIY stores, on your flower borders if you have dogs. It could kill and will most certainly poison them, as like chocolate it contains a lethal ingredient theobromine, which irritates the stomach lining, causing vomiting, diarrhoea and dehydration.

Pigs Ears

Collie breednotes, 20th May, reported that some dogs in the Liverpool area (not collies) were really poorly with renal failure after eating contaminated pigs ears from China. Too often there is no indication given as to the source of many items for sale for animals, so beware! www.virtualvet.com/petowner/poisonfacts.html

Lilies

Boston Terrier breed notes reported a near miss for a Boston who smelt the pollen from a beautiful pink stargazer lily. He started to be ill almost immediately. It is recommended you take the stamens out of the flowers as soon as you get home.

Human medicines

Anne Roslin-Williams gave a warning in her column in Dog World recently about the inadvisability of giving human medicines to dogs. A dog nearly died following the administration of Imodium to a youngster with a loose tummy. What is safe for humans can have a drastic effect on an animal, and even what is safe for one species of animal can be lethal for another.

New vaccination website for owners

A comprehensive website launched by animal health company, Intervet UK, offers owners a step by step guide to all aspects of pet vaccines and vaccination.

Visit www.future-of-vaccination.co.uk for further information and details on the content of the site. Intervet UK intend to keep this site updated with the latest developments in vaccination technology to provide an ongoing information service for owners.

Land of Holistic Pets' additive-free food

Launched by George Burns, founder of Land of Holistic Pets, the recipe for this free from allergy-inducing additives food features a blend of quality herbs and ingredients, including carbohydrates, vegetables, proteins, fats, herbs, vitamins, minerals and seaweed, which help flush out toxins and improve digestion by allowing internal organs to function in a more efficient way.

For further information visit: www.landofholisticpets.co.uk

Gene control through nutrition

At a press launch at Kensington Palace, Hill's Pet Nutrition introduced its concept of nutrigenomics featuring speakers Dr. Jeff Sampson, senior geneticist at the Kennel Club, Professor John Innes, head of the small animal hospital at the University of Liverpool, Dr. David Sargan of the University of Cambridge, as well as Professor Robert Pickard of the British Nutrition Foundation.

A brief introduction into the world of genetics from David Sargan revealed that humans share more than 90% of genes with dogs, and that dogs suffer from the largest number of genetic defects: currently at more than 450 known diseases, owing to the inbred nature of pedigree dogs. This similarity in gene sequence has enabled research in humans to help advance understanding of canine genetics and vice versa.

Professor Innes described how a greater understanding has been reached in the relationship between food and disease. He explained how research has revealed that in canine osteoarthritis, certain nutrients found in fish oil, namely eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) can effectively switch off the expression of a gene which can be responsible for osteoarthritis.

It is hoped that in future this type of genetic work and the role of nutrition in treating disease will hold exciting prospects for humans and animals alike.

Source – Veterinary Nursing Journal, August 2005

In case of emergency

In view of the recent tragic events in London, the ambulance service has launched a national 'in case of emergency' (ICE) campaign. The idea is that you store the word 'ICE' in your mobile phone address book and against it enter the number of the person you would want to be contacted in the case of emergency. For more than one contact name use ICE1, ICE2, ICE3, etc. In an emergency situation ambulance and hospital staff will then be able to quickly find out who your next of kin are and be able to contact them. Although designed with people in mind it can also be useful for anyone who owns dogs and other animal sometimes left at home on their own. Make one of your contact numbers for someone who knows about your animals.

EMERGENCY PACK

Barbara has produced a personal Emergency Information Pack for WHI which enables you to attach it to your car crate. It contains the following items:

- ❖ Contact details
- ❖ Useful tips
- ❖ Details of what a good Pet First Aid Kit should contain
- ❖ **Pet First Aid booklet** – *Quick Guide to Animal Emergencies*
- ❖ **Brochure identifying a SCWT** for use in situations where it may be difficult to recognise the breed
- ❖ Notebook & Pen
- ❖ Spring Clip for use if you have to fasten your dog safely to something quickly

Price £12.50 inc. p&p from Barbara

CELEBRATING OUR SENIORS

Following on from the article on Longevity in Newsletter 7, Gail Storie has written to say that Calum (*Maddalo Come Again*) lived to be 14 years, which considering he had leukaemia is remarkable. Gail's Clodagh (*Ch.Kilcleagh The Pippin*) reached 14½ and Buchan (*Ch.Dungarvan Buchan O'Farrell*) was 15½.

Sara John's Holly (*Linksdale Fickle Fortune*) was 14½, and her offspring, Just Justine 16½, Dohoci Charley Jake 15, and Dohoci Tranter Dewy also 15.

My Polly, (Ch.Stevelyn Blue Christmas at Willsbridge) reached 14 years and 3 months.

It is so rewarding to hear of Wheatens reaching a good age. Let me know of any you have, or have had in the past, that have reached 14 and over so that we can celebrate more of our 'Seniors' long and healthy lives.

Barbara

PEDIGREE DATA – For Sale

There are over 23,000 Wheatens of global ancestry at present in the WHI database.

This data is compatible with the **Anim-All** computer programme purchased separately from John Grierson 01204 300349

www.griersoft.com

(All proceeds go to the WHI Health Fund to continue our education programme)

All this data could be yours for just £75

Data is restricted to pedigree information only

This is a must for breeders. Having this data to hand can aid breeding decisions, particularly with regard to health issues

For further details please contact :
Sandra Jeffries on 01246 554742 E-mail :
Sananmalc@aol.com

MEDICAL TERMS BOOKLET – Questions & Answers

To help you to understand more about the words and terms that are used by the professionals caring for your Wheatens

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

Breed Specific Health Services available at the ANIMAL HEALTH TRUST

This booklet gives full information for SCWT owners and their vets about Blood and Urine Testing at the Animal Health Trust and is free on request from WHI.

MONTGOMERY HEALTH FORUM TAPES

A set of five audio 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.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Member Benefits

Impartial, informed and sympathetic advice and assistance on health issues from the WHI team.

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.

Plus regular Newsletters dedicated to health matters.

- Do you care about the health of your dog?
- Do you want to belong to a group dedicated to resolving issues about your dog's health?
- Do you want to share your knowledge and experience with others?

If you answer YES to all questions - then join us!

Contact :

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

There is no membership fee, but any donation will be appreciated to help with administration costs.

(Please make cheques payable to WHI)



Contacting us:

Telephone:

Carole Barnes-Davies	01245 231434
Ian & Lynn Carter	01793 765253
Karen Francis	02086 692255
Malcolm & Sandra Jeffries	01246 554742
Barbara Penney	01179 324297
Jan Thackray	01132 525206
Lynne Witheyman	02380 614508

Write: Wheaten Health Initiative
c/o 31 Storforth Lane
Chesterfield
Derbyshire
S41 0PP

E-mail: wheatenhealth@hotmail.com

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

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

"If you don't own a dog, at least one, there is not necessarily anything wrong with you but there may be something wrong with your life".
Roger Caras.

© Copyright 2005 'Wheaten Health Initiative'

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.