



HEALTH SEMINARS

The Newfoundland & Large
Breeds Seminar

held

26th & 27th September 2009

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A NEWF MAKES

The Newfoundland Health Group Speciality, 26 & 27 September 2009

What a difference this speciality made!

This was a truly unique two day event aimed at everyone interested in the Health issues which affect Newfoundlands and other Giant and large breeds.

It was a HUGE success.

It was organized by The Newfoundland Health Group which is a group of Newfoundland enthusiasts dedicated to improving knowledge and understanding of health issues in Newfies and other giant breeds.

They maintain a website – check www.newfoundlanddoghealth.info – and in support of their aims, for the first time put on a two-day health (and other things!) bonanza at Chasewater Outdoor Centre on 26 and 27 September.

The weekend was loosely centred around talks by leading specialists in Dermatology, Cardiology, Oncology and Orthopaedics but the Health Group didn't leave it at that – there was so much else going on!

Importantly, Echo Doppler clinics were run by recognized cardiologists Sarah Smith and Vicky Ironside on both days (at a greatly reduced price) and it is encouraging to note they were both kept fully occupied all day and still had to work overtime!

So what did go on?

On Saturday, the first lecture was

'SCRATCH THAT ITCH'

given by Dr Neil McEwan, Senior Lecturer in Veterinary Dermatology at the University of Liverpool, who explained that 25 per cent of presenting cases at first-opinion practices (i.e. your vet) were related to skin and/or ear problems.

He discussed diagnosis strategies and showed very graphic slides (yuk!) of some of the common symptoms before moving on to Canine Atopic Dermatitis, which I know is a problem many of us have come across in recent years. He described this as 'a genetically pre-disposed inflammatory and pruritic allergic skin disease' which was most commonly – though not exclusively- associated with the reaction of IgE antibodies to environmental allergens (house dust mites, storage mites, moulds) before discussing treatment and management.

Dr McEwan then moved on to hot spots (or pyotraumatic dermatitis/acute moist dermatitis as those of us who were there now call them – bet you're impressed huh?) and how he treats them. (It was interesting to note that whilst the professionals use various creams as part of the treatment, more than a few people in the audience felt that keeping the hot spots clean and dry was far more effective.)

Finally Dr McEwan looked at Otitis (ear disease), explaining and illustrating the three parts of the ear and some of the the various ills which can affect them. Believe me, you wouldn't want to see some of *those* slides just before lunch, but that's exactly what happened unfortunately.

A break for lunch..... then more

The afternoon lecture was

'PUMPS AND VALVES! – HEART PROBLEMS IN THE NEWFOUNDLAND'

given by Dr Jo Dukes-McEwan, well known to many of us as one of the world's leading veterinary cardiologists.

Dr Jo started by talking about Sub Aortic Stenosis (a Newfoundland problem unfortunately) before explaining a number of other heart conditions which appear to be breed-specific (but not our breed, thank God!).

She then moved onto DCM (dilated cardiomyopathy) explaining the development of the disease which has a long occult phase before developing in middle- to old-age in dogs. She explained that pre-clinical disease can be recognized using echo Doppler which makes it a very valuable asset both for managing the condition in individual dogs and also for assisting breeders in making informed and responsible breeding decisions. She explained the four main areas of drug therapy and discussed the question of taurine supplementation in relation to DCM. She said that research indicates Newfoundlands with DCM are taurine-deficient and recommends a dose in these cases of 500mg/day. She also suggested that poultry-based dry diets might be preferable to lamb-based ones from the DCM point of view.

Finally Dr Jo explained the research she and others have been carrying out over recent years in attempt to locate a genetic marker for DCM both in dogs and humans before outlining the latest LUPA project (see www.eurolupa.org). In response to a question from the floor, she said she felt a recognized BVA/KC heart testing scheme was on its way and all in all she left us (the audience) feeling hopeful of better times coming.

But that wasn't all

Sandra Constable very kindly offered KC Good Citizen Bronze Award tests in the morning and the familiar green and white rosettes were much in evidence.

Throughout the weekend Frances Carter gave Bowen Technique demonstrations & helpline.

In the afternoon after the talk everyone was invited to enter a Match and then to watch a Supermatch judged by Lindsay May between leading UK Champion and CC winning dogs and bitches. Despite the fact that everything was very light-hearted, they put on a real spectacle for us and – dare I say it – showed us how it should be done when you take your showing very seriously!

Results were as follows

Match

Judged by Jane Keeves

Winner of Match - Ratter's Seafar Mambo
Best Puppy in Match - Hobbs' Alphabear Thunderstruck

Supermatch

Judged by Lindsay May

Supermatch Winner - Springthorpe's Darkpeak Raging Storm at Millthorpe
Res Supermatch winner - Evans' Ch Abbeydore Sea Fiore

And so to Sunday:

In the morning Mr Gerry Polton from North Downs Specialist Referrals gave a talk on
'CANCER IN DOGS – A GROWING PROBLEM'
(and took pains to point out the *double entendre* in the title in case we hadn't noticed!).

He first explored the question of what cancer is ("a thing that grows") and explained what in his view is the astounding ability of cancer to bypass all the many natural mechanisms contained within the body to prevent it happening. He explained that from a veterinary point of view the priority is quality of life, not quantity and that carer support is important throughout what he terms the 'cancer journey'.

Recent survey results report that for 27 per cent of dogs cancer is the sole cause of death (a staggering statistic for most of us) and it appears that mongrels seem to have cancer less often than pedigree dogs (although the statistics for this conclusion may not be accessible).

Mr Polton then went through the cancer risk factors in dogs and mentioned certain types which appear prevalent in different breeds.

It is worth noting that he feels grow rate is linked to the incidence of osteosarcoma, i.e. dogs with long legs (like Wolfhounds and Newfs) are more likely to contract it. (A couple of other interesting points: male dogs who are castrated in/before puberty are 4½ times more likely to get prostate cancer; castrating/speying increased the risk of bone cancers in Rottweilers in Canada; speying after the age of 2½ doesn't affect the incidence of mammary tumours.)

He then went on to discuss various forms of treatment and was able to give us a few success stories to lighten the mood a bit.

Mr Polton was very positive in the area of future treatments, he feels we are on the verge of a new era in medicine and on the frontier of 'designer' medicines; we now have 9 dog genomes published and understanding is growing fast of the genetic bases of disease and gene-based therapeutics.

Finally Mr Polton took us through cardinal signs to look out for in our dogs and the various tests which can be done to obtain a definitive diagnosis. He stressed there is NO blood test for cancer despite contrary media information.

This was a very sombre topic for most of us but Mr Polton's humour and lightness of approach made it easier, and the fact that he over-ran lunch shows how much he kept us interested.

Yet more!

The afternoon lecture was

'ORTHOPAEDIC PROBLEMS IN NEWFOUNDLANDS & OTHER LARGE BREEDS'

by Mr Malcom McKee . This excellent informative talk generated much discussion on the genetic predisposition of dogs which suffer from Hip Dysplasia, Cruciate Ligament injury, and Elbow Dysplasia. The drawbacks of the current Hip Scoring scheme were explained and we were given an insight into the work currently being undertaken in the States which may ultimately result in a new hip scoring scheme in the future.

The importance of testing elbows as well as hips was apparent from the statistics collected for Newfoundlands referred to Mr. McKee. The reasons for Cruciate Ligament damage was a much debated subject and we were shown the most updated methods of repair. Great news was that the gene responsible for causing anterior cruciate ligament rupture in Newfoundlands has been isolated and further work is being carried out at Liverpool University. We all learnt an incredible amount and we over ran our time considerably owing to audience participation throughout .

All four weekend speakers were full of praise for the many Newfoundland owners and breeders who are working hard to improve health, and it was so fascinating to share information with the owners of other breeds like Mastiffs, St Bernards & Leonbergers.

The background events on Sunday included a ramble round this superb water park and Level 1 Draught Tests most efficiently run by The Southern Newfoundland Club . This gave novices a chance to have a go at carting.

And now for the plaudits: have I mentioned the food? Chasewater working group slaved over a hot stove all weekend and catered what probably amounts to hundreds of meals ranging from a bacon butty to a proper sit-down dinner. You done good, guys!

The event as a whole was only possible because of generous financial support from the Kennel Club Charitable Trust, Northern Newfoundland Club, Southern Newfoundland Club, Scottish Newfoundland Club and Newfoundland Club of Ireland . In addition there were many private donations and also superb gifts of prizes and auction goods including a Copenhagen plate from the Emerald Isle Newfoundland Club .

And lastly, can I thank the real heroes of this event – people whose commitment and love of the breed enabled them to put in months of work and effort to produce this superb event – and managed to make it fun as well. To the people who didn't take advantage of their labours – you missed a good 'un!

Kath Brown.