



Bichon Frisé

# Health Newsletter

January 2012 *Prepared by Pauline Johns*

**WELCOME** to what we hope will be the first of many annual Health Newsletters.

At the 2011 AGMs of our three breed clubs David Walklate was elected Health Representative for the Northern & Midland Bichon Frisé Club and Pauline Johns for the Bichon Frisé Club of Great Britain and the Southern Bichon Frisé Breeders Association. It was also agreed that Pauline would be the Kennel Club Health Representative for Bichons.

The aim of health reps is to focus on health issues that may occur in their breed and, just as importantly, work towards prevention. Their job is to communicate with their breed clubs and its members and, when necessary, with the British Veterinary Association and the Kennel Club.

**Health awareness is vital in safeguarding the future of our lovely breed and we can only do this with help from yourselves.**

How can you help?

- By returning the health survey which will be sent to members of all three breed clubs
- By sharing any health issues you may have come across
- By sharing any tips that you think may have helped your bichons

There is no shame in finding you have a health problem with your bichon. However it is a crime to keep it a closely guarded secret!

## **Bichons move to Schedule A of the BVA/KC Eye Testing Scheme for Hereditary Cataracts**

What does this mean?

With effect from 1 January 2012 Bichons were elevated from Schedule B to Schedule A of the BVA/KC Eye Testing scheme. All eye test results are currently sent to the British Veterinary Association (BVA) but for those breeds on Schedule A all results are also recorded on the Kennel Club database, published in the Kennel Club Breed Records Supplement and appear on progeny registration certificates. You may examine the results for any dog on the Kennel Club's web site and may also apply for a print out of all bichons who were tested after January 2012. There will be a small charge of around £6 which increases as the data base becomes larger.



In line with all other breeds on Schedule A for Hereditary Cataracts, given the support of all three breed clubs, Assured Breeders will be required by the KC to have both sire and dam of a litter tested clear in order to be able to register that litter under the ABS Scheme. Should all three clubs agree the ABS requirements could be approved in June to commence in July. This would be followed by a six months grace period in which to comply with the new requirements which would come into full effect from January 2013. Club Secretaries and breed note writers will be kept informed.

When and how often should we test?

A bichon's first test should be at about 12-15 months or in the case of a male siring a litter, prior to his first mating. Thereafter a bitch should be tested prior to each mating and a male used at stud tested annually. An HC affected dog may not produce detectable cataracts until he /she is six or seven years old so one clear test at two or three years of age does not mean that a bichon is free of HC. To be deemed completely free of HC bichons should be tested up to the age of seven. A kennel cannot consider itself free of disease until at least three generations are tested clear which includes any outside males used at stud. It is hoped that our breed clubs will put on eye testing sessions, in rotation, annually.

**What does this man have to do with eye health?**



His name is Desiderius Erasmus, a Dutch philosopher and leading intellectual figure of the early sixteenth century. His most famous quotation has survived the passage of time:

**'Prevention is better than cure'**

# THE PROBABILITY OF HEREDITARY CATARACT IN THE BICHON FRISÉ IN THE UK

*by Prof Peter GC Bedford FRCVS*

The first documentation of possible hereditary cataract (HC) in the Bichon Frisé breed was in the USA where one survey suggested a high incidence of some 10% in the sample of dogs tested ( Gelatt et al 2003). So it should come as no surprise to learn that the same condition is seen in the breed in the UK. The actual incidence figure is not known simply because an insufficient number of dogs are seen on the official BVA/KC scheme and clinical cases are often not reported from general practice. But there is no doubt that the disease is about and only careful vigilance will keep the numbers in check.

Cataract is opaqueness of the lens and when the opacity is severe the eye is blind. In your breed the opacity starts in the lens cortex in young to middle-aged dogs and there is progression to a total involvement of the whole lens. It is bilateral and the patient is thus blind. Furthermore there can be accompanying complications as the result of an inflammation of the inside of the eye (uveitis) and retinal detachment. Sadly it is reported that the surgery to remove cataract in Bichon Frise is often complicated by the development of a destructive uveitis and retinal detachment. So potentially this can be a serious disease situation in your breed – a blinding condition for which treatment may be unsuccessful. Far better to be aware of the potential and make certain that you breed only from disease free stock.

There is some doubt about the mechanism of inheritance, but, as for most breeds, it is suggested that HC is a recessive trait. In the absence of a DNA test and the variation in the age of onset it means that both affected and carrier dogs, particularly stud dogs, can cause problems. Regular eye checks will pick up those dogs that go on to develop HC and also help identify the carriers. Carriers do not show signs of the disease, but when a carrier is mated to another carrier then 25% of the puppies will go on to develop the disease. Fifty per cent of the litter will be carriers and the remaining 25% will be genetically normal. (Of course affected to affected can only produce disease, whilst carrier to affected will produce a 50% split of carriers and affecteds ).

Undoubtedly the arrival of a DNA test for HC will take all the doubt and uncertainty out of the breeding equation, but until that day arrives the only way to attempt disease control is to use the BVA/ KC scheme to ensure that you are breeding and have bred only with clinically normal dogs.

Reference.

Gelatt KN, Wallace MR, Andrew SE et al. Cataracts in the Bichon Frise. Vet. Ophthalmol. 2003. 6: 3-9.



## Health Survey



2012 will see another Health Survey being sent out to members of all three breed clubs. It is so important for you to return this questionnaire as this is the only way that the breed can monitor any health problems that may give cause for concern. The information returned is confidential and is forwarded to the Kennel Club's Health Department.

With so much bad press given to the canine world it is even more important than ever that breeders and owners do their best to care for the health of their own breed. So please, let's we make this the year of bumper record returns.



Surolan, which contains anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and anti-inflammatory ingredients is often given by Vets for ear infections. If you use it twice daily for 3-4 days on hot spots it will prevent the area from crusting and also prevent the hair loss that often occurs.