

participate in. Here's hoping there's another Swiss Dog Day Afternoon next year. Don't miss it!

"PRA for DUMMIES"

By Lynda Hruby Vice-Chair

PRA Research Committee

There seems to be a "Dummies" explanation for most everything these days so here is one for PRA.

You know Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA) is a difficult disease to understand and I definitely know that for a fact. Our Research Chair, Jane Torma, keeps trying to drum it into my head but I have to say it has definitely taken a while for it all to register. I still get mixed up on all the medical terminology, but I feel a bit ahead of the game as my HUNTER is a PRA dog and I can watch it all first hand. My wonderful ophthalmologist here in British Columbia, Dr. Graham Lewis, DVM, has written an overview on PRA in general, which is very helpful in understanding the disease. His write-up follows:

Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA) is a condition describing the gradual loss of function of the retina, the visual nerve in the eye. In some breeds, inheritance of PRA has been established but in others the cause is unknown.

Common breeds affected are the miniature Toy Poodles, Irish Setters, Cocker Spaniels, Samoyed, Norwegian Elkhound, and others. Early in the disease when only the rods in the retina are affected, the dog appears to have difficulty seeing in poorly lit surroundings. This decreased vision will eventually lead to night blindness. Dogs at this stage will also have less peripheral vision than normal. Owners may also notice that the dogs' pupil is large even in brightly lit surroundings. Dogs with PRA will become blind in the day as well. The progression to total blindness may take months to years and may not even be noticed until the dog is placed in unfamiliar surroundings.

Unfortunately, because the body cannot regenerate nerves, there is no treatment for damage to the nerve. Animals known to have this disease will live

very well as house pets providing their handicap is considered. They should not be left alone around open staircases unless they have proven a familiarity with the steps and should NEVER be left alone near pools.

Progressive retinal atrophy is NOT a painful disease and in no way affects the natural longevity of the pet. Visually impaired animals can live long happy lives.

Although a direct cause/effect relationship has not been established, poodles with PRA often develop cataracts. Removal of the cataract with retinal disease present will NOT improve vision.

- Graham .T. Lewis, DVM

This article does not go into all the technical medical material but please visit our Website www.nemda.org where you will be able to read the in depth material of Dr. Bernard Spiess and Dr. Peterson-Jones. What it does say is you MUST get your dogs' eyes tested by a registered ophthalmologist so you know what the status of your dogs' eyes are and you will never unintentionally put your pet in a dangerous circumstance.

PRA in the Entlebucher is a late onset type so it does not show up in puppies. The medical material states that after the age of 4 years, it should show up in the dog. Please get the eyes checked out at least once in your pet's lifetime, just to make sure you know if your dog is afflicted or not.

You can now understand why our PRA Research Program is so very important.

Did you know that if we can get a DNA test for PRA we will be able to test our puppies and within two generations of breeding genetically known dogs we can develop clear lines and wipe out this terrible disease? Please help us by donating to the DNA research program. For all of you who live in the U.S.A., you will receive a tax receipt from Michigan State University for your donations. For

more information please visit our Website www.nemda.org or contact Jane Torma, our PRA Research Committee Chair, at jptorma@pcii.net.

Entlebucher Note Cards Now Available

Now you can order 4¼" x 5½" white note cards with envelopes with a black and white sketch of an Entlebucher head on the front. Cost is 10 for \$10 that includes packaging, mailing, and a contribution to the PRA Research Fund. They are perfect for a quick note or thank you. Order as many as you like! Send a check made out to NEMDA to Linda Planting, 220 State Street, Suite H, Los Altos, CA 94022. For international orders, please contact Linda at lplanting@aol.com or 650-949-2002 to determine mailing costs. Cards will be available at the Entlefest 2000, which will be held in conjunction with Swiss Days in Midway, Utah over Labor Day weekend.



PRA PLEA

By Jane Torma - PRA Research Chair

As most of you know, I have stepped down as NEMDA President to devote my full attention to the development of a DNA test for PRA in the Entlebucher Sennenhund. Lynda Hruby, Sue Edick and myself have formed a new PRA Research Committee to assist Dr. Petersen-Jones develop our test. But we need you help! All of you!

Please, if you own an Entlebucher Sennenhund, have its eyes tested by an ACVO Ophthalmologist. If you are breeding or planning on breeding your Entlebucher, you should be doing this every year. If your Entlebucher is just your beloved pet, please do it once in your dog's lifetime, preferably after the age of 4. It is not that expensive, but I know that ACVO Ophthalmologists are not as convenient for most of us as our family veterinarian, but please do it for your dog.

If your dog's eyes check out fine, please send the CERF form into CERF to be added to their database (please put your dog's real full name on the form). If your dog has PRA, please bring in our Michigan State University form to your Veterinarian and have blood drawn and sent to Dr. Petersen-Jones, along with a copy of the eye examine and your dogs pedigree. You can get the form from our website at www.NEMDA.org or please call either Lynda Hruby at (604) 541-2822 or myself for a copy. If your dog does not show any signs of PRA, please send a money donation to Dr. Petersen-Jones to aid in the cause!

Whatever your dogs outcome, we need to track how our dogs are doing on this side of the Atlantic. Please contact me, Jane Torma at jptorma@pcii.net or call at (608) 348-8723, or fax at (608) 248-8226 or write me at: Jane Torma, 8841 St. Rd 80, Platteville, WI 53818.

Our Genetics Committee will also need your information, so either contact Teri Beeman,