

## The AKC Parent Club Health Conference – 2007

I recently had the pleasure of attending the latest AKC Parent Club Health Conference as the representative of the ABGA Health Committee. The conference is held every two years. It was held at the Adam's Mark Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri from October 19<sup>th</sup> through October 21<sup>st</sup>. It was truly an extraordinary event! The entire conference was sponsored and paid for by Purina ... 3 night stay, all meals and all speaker events. The only out of pocket expense was the transportation to and from St. Louis. I have attended many conferences in my career and I have to admit that this was one of the most professionally run events that I have ever attended. Everything, from hotel check in, to lectures, to lunches, to banquets, to check out ... were flawlessly run!

I have to say that the most exhilarating part of the conference was to be surrounded by over 350 people whose passion revolves around the future health of their numerous dog breeds. I met countless new friends who were not only interesting to meet but were so encouraging about the pursuit of health issues in general. There were parent club members present that ranged from those who have started Health research projects to members who have not yet even conducted a Health Survey. Other attendees included Rebecca Stanavich who accumulated our statistics for our last Health Survey, and Eddie Dziuk who represents the Canine Health Information Center (CHIC) to people that I met at lunch that I was unaware would be future speakers within the next few hours.

Over a period of 2 ½ days there were over 20 hours of 23 presentations from the top scientists and researchers from across the country. There were over 150 AKC Parent clubs represented. In 2005 (when Denise Brusseau Ortman was able to attend) several of the presentations were geared towards Health Surveys and how one might encourage members to participate. This year, the assumption was that Health Surveys and club participation were behind us and the concentration was on the progress report of Canine Health Research.

I have to admit, since I am a lay person and not involved directly with science and research, some of the presentations were far beyond me to fully comprehend. Although I paid strong attention to all of the presentations ... below are but a few of the examples of "topics" that were listed in the program ...

#1. Cytotherapeutics in Veterinary Medicine

#2. Canine Comparative Oncology and Genomics Consortium

#3. Is Canine Degenerative Cruciate Rupture a Consequence of Rheumatic Disease?

Oh well, I'm only human! The most interesting point was to observe the audience and see how many people were so energized about the topics. One saw many people

nudging shoulders and saying "See ...I told you it was happening! Yes, I agree, No I don't agree!" It was truly intriguing.

Below are a few of the comments that I thought were very interesting and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the ABGA. They are simply quotes that I heard during the conference.

#1. 25% of all dogs (pure bred or not) are effected or carriers of major genetic diseases.

#2. The definition of a responsible breeder = Those who use genetic health testing for the interest of their breed.

#3. 95 AKC Parent Clubs now participate with the AKC Canine Health Information Center. (The ABGA should strongly consider becoming a member of CHIC. In order to do so the ABGA must recommend a "required" list of Health tests to be supported by the ABGA. This could be as basic as "CERF" and tests for "Patella Luxation". (These "requirements" would only be listed as "CHIC" requirements ... they do not have to be listed as ABGA membership requirements.)

#4. 50% of all dogs older than 10 years will die of cancer.

One of the most interesting and entertaining presentations was given by Peggy Kustritz, DVM, PhD on the topic of Canine Reproduction – Spay/Neuter. This particular presentation would be great for either a Breeders Educational Program and/or a Health Committee Presentation. All of the presentations will be available on DVD's and/or written transcripts within the next couple of months.

I truly hope that within the next year that the ABGA will be able to benefit from the personal presentations that I was able to experience. In the future, my ambition is that more and more of the membership will join the ABGA Health Committee for the future health of the "Brussels Griffon".

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Grigalunas

Chairman – ABGA Health Committee