

Backcross Project Comments

Susanne Hughes, DVM

I sit here wondering what I could possibly write in support of this important backcross project that hasn't already been written quite eloquently and logically by those working so diligently on it. Statistics have been documented repeatedly and are available DCA publications. I find I must tell you what you already know.

Folks on this list are now quite well educated about Dalmatian hyperuricosuria, hyperuricosemia and urate stone disease.

You know all AKC Dals are affected with the inability to convert uric acid to allantoin. Subsequently some Dals form urate sediment, crystals and stones, while some even progress to urethral blockage. You know how to attempt to manage this clinical problem in Dals, and you know that despite recent claims, male Dals are still blocking and requiring surgery even in the most attentive and compliant of homes.

You know that 30+ years ago Dr. Schaible introduced the normal uric acid gene into a population of Dalmatians by one pointer x Dal breeding. You know he maintained this gene pool, selecting normal uric acid producing dogs as he could in this one man operation. At least one investigator has confirmed that these dogs actually do produce much lower levels of uric acid than AKC Dals. Therefore it follows that these dogs cannot produce the sediment, crystals and stones like AKC Dals do. You know that thanks to recent development of powerful genetic tools we can now actually identify at a very early age which dogs carry the gene for normal uric acid metabolism.

You know that recent efforts to expand Dr. Schaible' backcross project have led to more serious breeders selectively using these LUA (low uric acid) Dals in their programs without the benefit of AKC registration. As in any breeding program, conscious selection of characteristics considered correct and typical of the breed result in production of more typical Dals. In this case, one of the selection criteria is low uric acid production so that too is incorporated into these dogs. You have seen photos of these very typical Dals. You know there are no reports of new genetic disease carried by these Dals.

Of course these dogs will continue to be closely monitored for urate stone disease as well as any other deleterious genetic consequences. Thirty plus years is a lot of evidence, but more is being gathered now that testing is more accurate and readily available. There is a large and growing network of individuals committed to this project and dedicated to making results of all testing available to everyone.

So you know all the above, but you still believe these LUA Dals aren't 'real Dals', fine, don't use them in your breeding program. It doesn't even matter if you believe any of the educational material provided about the backcross project and LUA Dals. Stay away from them as you would any other dog you believe to be incompatible with your breeding program for any reason. But for Pete's sake allow those of us who want to incorporate the gene for normal uric acid production into our breeding programs of quality AKC registerable Dals to do so! Allow us to breed and place male puppies without feeling guilty for saddling the new owner with the possible consequences of this known genetic defect in their dog. Allow us to produce dogs that can ingest levels of protein considered optimal for the species, not seriously restricted in type or amount because they are Dals. Allow us to breed dogs that can live normal healthy lives in the average pet household employing normal husbandry practices for pet dogs.

In my opinion, blocking efforts to allow AKC registration of LUA Dalmatians at this time or in the near future is wholly unethical. We have a growing gene pool of typical Dals from which to carefully select stock, the scientific tools to allow confidence in our selections and the freewill to utilize these dogs or not in our individual breeding programs. If we thought our reputation as a club suffered in the past over deafness and temperament issues, I can promise it will be annihilated if the public learns we actually voted to deny acceptance of Dals carrying a gene which corrects such a well known serious defect in the breed.

Respectfully submitted,

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