

Answers to Membership Questions

Prepared by Denise Powell

June 6, 2011

Question: What was the original experimental design for the project?

Answer: Dr. Schaible described his project in an article that was published in the April 1981 AKC Gazette magazine. A copy of the article has been available online for several years. Recently, it was added to DCA's website www.thedca.org/LUA/SchaibleAKCGazArt.pdf

Question: If the purpose of allowing the backcross descendants to be registered is to improve the health of the breed, should we only accept backcross dogs that carry the LUA gene?

Answer: The AKC encourages registration of all pups in a litter and leaves it up to breeders to decide if pups will be placed with full or limited registration or even to withhold registration. According to the AKC website "AKC is a registry body. A registration certificate identifies the dog as the offspring of a known sire and dam, born on a known date. It in no way indicates the quality or state of health of the dog."

Proponents of LUA Dalmatians are seeking to register descendants of Stocklore Stipples (AKC reg #NS601000) to repair the break in pedigree that was created by the hold that prevented registration of the two litters out of Stipples. Once the initial group of Stipples' progeny are registered, it will be up to individual breeders to assess future litters they raise and decide if pups will be placed with full or limited registration. Just as some Dalmatian breeders place unilaterally deaf pups with limited registration, breeders of LUA Dalmatians may choose limited registration for HUA pups they produce.

Question: If the purpose is just so that these dogs can be shown, why can't they be introduced as a new breed or continue showing in UKC events?

Answer: LUA Dalmatians are Dalmatians, not some new breed. Proponents of LUA Dalmatians have many reasons for seeking AKC registration. Being able to show at AKC events is one of those reasons. The original purpose of conformation shows was the evaluation of breeding stock. For some exhibitors, that is still the purpose for showing in conformation. In the United States the majority of Dalmatians that are shown in conformation are shown at AKC events.

It is perfectly reasonable for LUA Dalmatian breeders to want to exhibit their Dals where the majority of other Dals are exhibited.

Question: Considering the following, how is the LUA a solution to this health problem?

1) There is only the possibility of incorporating the LUA gene in puppies from LUA breedings. When an LUA is bred to an HUA only some of the puppies are born with the LUA gene. To eliminate the HUA gene from the breed would require no more breeding of HUA dogs.

Answer: Proponents of LUA Dalmatians are not proposing the elimination of all HUA Dalmatians. Breeding of LUA Dalmatians is a personal choice. Those who choose to breed LUA Dalmatians look forward to eventually getting to the point where they have only LUA pups in the litters they produce. But they also understand the AKC Health and Welfare Advisory Committee's caution about rushing the process and creating genetic bottlenecks. For now, LUA breeders have to be content with knowing that each LUA pup that is born is one less Dalmatian at risk of forming urate stones. LUA Dal breeders can only hope, just as other Dalmatian breeders hope, that the HUA pups they produce will be among the many lucky HUAs that never obstruct.

2) Even if HUA dogs are eliminated from all breeding, LUA dogs (in other breeds) still form urate stones. They just don't form them with as high of an incidence as HUA Dalmatians.

Answer: This question indicates a serious misunderstanding of the facts. Urate stones cannot form unless the urine is supersaturated with uric acid. Dogs with low levels of uric acid in their urine, be they Dalmatians or dog of other breeds, do not form urate stones. The SLC2A9 gene mutation identified in Dalmatians is also found in other breeds. And dogs with liver shunts can have high levels of uric acid in their urine. A dog, of any breed, that has urate stones must have urine uric acid levels high enough to reach the point of supersaturation.

Question: It is often stated that people can choose to use LUA dogs or not in their breeding programs. But once the starting population of LUA dogs get registered how will people know if the offspring carry the LUA or are just offspring of a LUA dog that does not carry the LUA gene?

Answer: The key to knowing which Dalmatians are LUA is the DNA test for hyperuricosuria. Most LUA breeders submit LUA DNA test results to the OFA

open database where they can be viewed by anyone. So, just as Dalmatian people use the OFA database to research BAER hearing results they can use the database to verify whether or not a Dal is LUA.

Question: One of the statements frequently made by the people involved in the project is that they are breeding for healthier Dalmatians. Why then, have they allowed a uni bitch to be used in the breeding program?

Answer: The same question could be asked of DCA. Why does DCA allow the breeding of unis? The answer is that, in this country, individual breeders make their own decisions. Each breeder weighs the pros and cons of the dogs they use for breeding. There is no “They” that oversees the breeding of LUA Dalmatians.

Question: Is there any regulation (health clearances, structure, temperament, titles) as to which sires and dams are used in the breeding programs of the various LUA people who have whelped or plan to whelp litters

Answer: The Dalmatian fancy in the United States has consistently resisted all attempts to regulate decisions made by breeders. While clubs and associations may attempt to influence members by way of policies and guidelines, ultimately breeding decisions are made by individual breeders.

Question: Assuming AKC will allow temporary registration numbers: Would you be willing to accept registration starting with the current backcross descendants with a temporary Registration number? They would achieve full registration when then have a CHIC number and their AKC Championship?

Answer: The AKC is very clear on this subject and has always maintained that AKC registration is in no way an indication of quality or state of health. It might make sense to propose special conditions for undocumented dogs that are brought in from tribal areas of foreign countries. But anyone looking at the pedigrees of today’s LUA Dalmatians can see that they come from essentially the same lines as the Dalmatians currently exhibiting in the AKC show ring.

Question: If AKC registration is granted, how long would it take to propagate the LUA gene throughout the Dalmatian population? And if we are not going to propagate this gene throughout the entire Dalmatian population, why should we register the backcross descendants?

Answer: LUA proponents are not attempting to propagate the LUA gene

throughout the Dalmatian population. They seek to propagate the gene in their own breeding programs. If LUA Dalmatian breeders are successful in producing Dalmatians that are widely admired by many other breeders, in a few decades LUA Dalmatians may become the norm. The Dalmatian breed benefits from having a diversity of breeders focused on a wide variety of goals in their breeding programs. It is often said that there are no perfect dogs. But within the entire population, we hope to find all the traits to needed produce dogs that epitomize the ideal for the breed.

Question: If the LUA dogs are allowed registration, will record keeping (line breedings, etc) continue as we proceed forward?

Answer: For the past several years, LUA Dalmatian breeders have voluntarily submitted information about their litters and individual dogs to the LUA Dalmatians website www.LUADalmatians.com . They have also submitted health test results, including DNA test for hyperuricosuria, to the OFA database. www.offa.org I expect those who have made such information available in the past will continue to do so.

Question: Are the health tests being done on LUA dogs like we are doing on the Dals. If so what tests are being done?

Answer: First of all, LUA Dalmatians are Dalmatians and their test results are listed on the OFA website among other Dalmatians. Many LUA Dalmatian breeders are doing all the tests necessary to get CHIC numbers as well as the DNA test for hyperuricosuria.

Question: What are the hearing stats in the LUA litters?

Answer: Hearing stats for LUA Dalmatian litters have been posted on www.LUADalmatians.com website for the past several years. Also, many LUA Dalmatian breeders submit BAER test results to the OFA database. www.offa.org

Question: Have the litters been watched as they grow up? I keep tract of my puppies through out the life of the dog. Are LUA dogs followed if so have there been any health problems that have shown up?

Answer: The same kinds of health problems have been reported in LUA Dalmatians as are commonly found in other Dalmatians. While some breeders

follow all pups closely for their entire lives, there is no standard practice when it comes to follow up and many breeders rely on owners to let them know about problems that occur.

Question: Are LUA dogs more prone to bladder infections?

Answer: Even if there was a system in place for keeping track of all health data for all LUA Dalmatians there is no comparable data for the general population of Dalmatians. Since there are no statistics for bladder infections in the general population Dalmatians, there is no way to say for sure if LUA Dalmatians are more or less prone to bladder infections than other Dalmatians. I am not aware of any veterinary literature that indicates that dogs with low uric acid are more prone to bladder infections than dogs with high uric acid.

Question: It has been said that some of the LUA Dogs have formed stones and even blocked. I would like to know what type of stones those dogs formed? I would also like to know if the LUA breeders are publicly acknowledging that these dogs have formed stones, since in the past they have stated that the LUA Dogs will not form stones. It has been said that some of the LUA Dogs have formed stones and even blocked. I would like to know what type of stones those dogs formed? I would also like to know if the LUA breeders are publicly acknowledging that these dogs have formed stones, since in the past they have stated that the LUA Dogs will not form stones.

Answer: LUA breeders have openly acknowledged the fact that one LUA Dalmatian had a bladder infection and was diagnosed as having struvite crystals. And that an HUA Dal from an LUA litter received non-surgical treatment for partial obstruction and was found to have urate crystals. Rumors about LUA Dals that blocked are just that - rumors.

1. How many LUA dals are there currently in the project? What follow-up testing is being conducted to identify if the gene removal was successful (bladder ultrasound, urine analysis, etc).

Answer: Information about the number of LUA Dalmatians has been available at www.luadalmatians.com for the past several years. Urate stones can only form in urine that is supersaturated with uric acid. Dogs with the normal SLC2A9 gene do not have enough uric acid in their urine for urate crystals to form, therefore they cannot form urate stones. Proponents of LUA Dalmatians approached several researchers about doing ultrasound studies on LUA Dals and found none that felt there was any scientific merit in looking for a urate crystals/stones in LUA dogs.

2. Beyond urinary tract medical monitoring, are other health tests being conducted to identify if any new conditions are being introduced with the removal of the gene?

Answer: The majority of dogs in the majority of breeds have the normal SLC2A9 gene. LUA is a normal condition for dogs. There is no reason to think that re-introducing the normal gene into the Dalmatian breed will cause any unwanted conditions in Dalmatians.

3. Has the project reached an end point or are there more objectives to meet?

Answer: The backcross project reached an end point in 1981, with the AKC registration Stocklore Stipples. At that time, the AKC reviewed Dr. Schaible's work and determined that he had done what he set out to do, which was to produce Dalmatians with low uric acid. All that was left to do from there was to continue to develop show potential and maintaining overall good health in LUA Dalmatians.

4. What does the "future state" of the project look like (vision) and how does the team intend to chart the course?

Answer: There are as many answers to this question as there are LUA Dalmatian breeders. As the number of LUA breeders has increased, there has been more discussion about seeking expert advice to developing some guidelines specific to the breeding of LUA Dalmatians.

Question: Dr. Bartges stated over a year ago that one of his concerns was that by eliminating high uric acid in purebred Dalmatians we may just end up trading one type of stone problem (urate stones) for another type (ie: calcium oxalate for instance). There was talk about one of the LUA dogs having formed crystals. Were those crystals ever identified? Does this not warrant caution when this could actually be the beginning of exactly what Dr. Bartges feared?

Answer: As far as I know, no one else in the field of canine uroliths shares Dr. Bartges view that Dalmatians have a second genetic defect that makes them prone to stone forming of all kinds. One LUA Dal did have a bladder infection and was diagnosed as having struvite crystals. The most common urinary stones in dogs are composed of struvite. In most cases, struvite stones form as a result of staph infections in the bladder. One case of a common urinary tract infection in one LUA Dalmatian is hardly cause for alarm.

Question: We have been repeatedly told of how pervasive stone forming is in our breed as it currently exists. Yet many studies have put the incidence at 1 to 3%. As proof that this is more than likely the case to date there has not been one reported incidence of stone forming in any of the HUA pups produced in the "experiment" to date. Considering roughly 50% of all the pups produced to date should be HUA doesn't that seem just a bit odd to anyone if the incidence is so high?

Answer: The problem of urate stone in the breed was identified long before Dr. Schaible began the backcross project and continues to be discussed to this day. One may quibbling over the exact percentage of Dalmatians that receive veterinary treatment for stones, but there really is no doubt that urate stones are a significant problem in the breed. HUA Dals from LUA litters are at the same risk of forming urate stones as any other dog with high levels of uric acid in their urine. Among LUA litters born since 2005, there has been one reported case of an HUA Dal having been treated for urate stones/grit. Surgery was not required in his case.

All conscientious breeders provide new owners of HUA Dalmatians with detailed information about proper diet and management to reduce the risk of obstruction. Just as many AKC Dalmatian breeders can honestly say that very few of the Dals from their lines need medical treatment for urate stones, LUA Dalmatian breeders count themselves luck to have only gotten one of those dreaded phone calls.