

RRCUS HEALTH AND GENETICS COMMITTEE REPORT FOR 2005

December 16, 2004

Cynthia Roethel; 434-248-5018; houndscrest@earthlink.net CHAIRMAN/CHF Liaison.

Debra Driza; 760-597-9383; houndrat@aol.com; Cancer Liaison. MCT; Osteosarcoma; Lymphoma; Hemangiosarcoma

Kathy Thompson; 503-630-4648; kathytai@zzz.com; Degenerative Myelopathy Liaison.

Denise Flaim; 516-676-3398; revodona@aol.com; H&G National Specialty Liaison; DNA Liaison.

Meg Willis Redfern; 517-851-8841; redfern@cvm.msu.edu CHIC/OFA Liaison.

Martha Anderson PhD (psychology); 540-236-8178; marti@shenandoahlabradors.com

Cynthia McFadden: cjmcfadden@hotmail.com

Carlee Davies; 301-663-1359; aslanrr@adelphia.net

Diane Blackwood; 716-655-1887; LegacyRR@webtv.net

VETERINARY REVIEW AND ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE

Susan Ralston, VMD; 801-829-3005; ridgeview@webpipe.net; VRAC Chairman

Katrina Viviano, DVM: 608-238-1236; viviano@svm.vetmed.wisc.edu; Health Survey Coordinator

Felicity Grzemski PhD (biochemical toxicology); 734-340-3788;

felicity.grzemski@pfizer.com

Lisa Miller, DVM; 662-838-8355; Selchi@aol.com ****

Christina Wistrom, PhD(molecular biology); 909-789-8290;

wistrom@worldnet.att.net

INTENT TO RESIGN AS CHAIRMAN:

With the approval of the Officers and Board of Directors of RRCUS I will continue as the Chairman of the Health and Genetics Committee for 2005 but will not be able to continue in this capacity in the years to follow.

I have found the work gratifying and I am proud of the progresses we have made, especially in our research endeavors and in the promotion of genetic testing. Unfortunately, I am running out of time in the day/week/month/year to do this job correctly as I find myself having to devote more and more time to personal and family affairs.

I am excited about our committee members as they are motivated and willing to work. I have delegated responsibilities to qualified members in order to spread the corporate knowledge and ensure areas under our purview receive the attention they deserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as the Chairman of the Health and Genetics Committee for the 4 years ending in December 2005. I will miss many aspects of this job and it will be difficult to let go.

DUTIES OF LIAISON POSITIONS

The Health and Genetics Committee is expanding in several directions. No one person can do it all, nor can everyone do all the jobs with any degree of consistency. We have several focus points that need specialized attention - where one person is needed to liaison with a particular organization. The following positions are designed to do that. These liaisons keep the chairman continually advised and updated on their efforts.

CHF Liaison: The liaison interfaces between CHF and the RRCUS Officers and Board of Directors on matters pertaining to research grants and funding of those grants. The liaison distributes copies of abstracts to members of the Veterinary Review and Advisory Committee for their recommendations as to the pertinence of the proposed research to the Rhodesian Ridgeback.

Cancer Liaison: This position was formerly held by Carlee Davies and at that time dealt only with MCT submissions to UC at Davis for Dr. London. This position has expanded to include submission of other cancer samples from Rhodesian Ridgebacks to other investigators to include but are not limited to Dr. Breen at North Carolina State University; Dr. Stuart Helfand, DVM, at University of Wisconsin; Jaime Modiano, VMD, PhD at AMC Cancer Research Center and Natasha Olby, VetMB, PhD at North Carolina State University. Our effort to get cancer specimens to these investigators not only assists in cancer research in dogs but also in humans. The liaison will essentially be matching Ridgeback owners with the correct investigators as well as publishing pertinent cancer related material for the membership.

Degenerative Myelopathy Liaison: Duties center on helping owners and breeders who have Ridgebacks with presumed degenerative myelopathy confirm the diagnosis and report it to the health survey. Due to the overwhelming impact this disease could have on the breed we need to get a better handle on its prevalence. The only way to confirm the diagnosis is posthumously. This is a very sensitive and emotional situation. People are grieving and the last thing they think about is "the betterment of the breed." Procedures need to be set up in advance in order to get the diagnosis confirmed. State labs are usually involved and a Vet school has to be found that can do the tissue analysis. A list of nationwide resources is being prepared. The biggest obstacles we face in this effort is the expense associated with confirming the diagnosis, which can be as high as \$500.00, not to mention the emotional strain it puts on owners. The spine and brain have to be harvest in total, which, as you can imagine is quite invasive and disturbing to grieving owners.

H&G National Specialty Liaison: This has never been a formal position in the past but the need has become apparent. Specialty show chairs need someone to guide them in the area of setting up health clinics, seminars and other health related events. The membership likes seeing clinics but they have to be set up and well organized with enough people to run them. Often clinics cannot be done at all due to the location of the

show and/or lack of infrastructure within the show committee. This liaison carries forward the lessons learned from previous specialties and makes recommendations to the show chair on what works and what does not work. Also this liaison will be responsible for working with show chairs, the H&G Chair and the Education Committee Chair setting up health related seminars and speakers.

DNA Liaison: This position has been established to support Dr. Neff at the University of California. We have established a unique relationship with Dr. Neff and, while unusual, it is worth cultivating. Dr. Neff has an interest in the ridgeless phenomena in Ridgebacks. His interest is not merely academic as his goal is to identify the genetic cause of ridgeless in an effort to create a reasonably priced genetic test to identify carriers. Part of Dr. Neff's salary is provided by a private genetics laboratory whose goal is to create genetic tests and market them. Essentially we are helping him get DNA samples that may, or may not, lead to a genetic test for ridgelessness. The only cost to RRCUS is the time and energy the liaison spends providing Dr. Neff with information and organizing the DNA collection. There is no contract, agreement or any sort of binding arrangement between RRCUS and Dr. Neff. At this point we have a mutually beneficial relationship that costs RRCUS nothing monetarily, but there is a potential that the Rhodesian Ridgeback may benefit from this arrangement.

The liaison is already working with him by broadening his information base on ridges and helping him organize his DNA collection. Things like crowns, multiple crowns, single crowns, length of the ridge, etc. are things he was not aware of. They have now branched into collecting samples on family members. He has been very appreciative of the help. We see this association continuing to perhaps include sample collection for color variations, dermoids, and perhaps other genetic diseases.

CHIC/OFA Liaison: This position was once two positions held by Christina Wistrom and Nelda Vaughn respectively. These have been combined as the two are so closely related. The liaison will be the situational expert on OFA findings and CHIC protocol. The Liaison will be our interface to OFA and CHIC. The liaison's goals are to keep the membership informed about OFA policy and explain their rationale through a variety of articles and other publishable material. The liaison will interface with CHIC and make sure that RRCUS' requirements are well defined.

Veterinary Review and Advisory Subcommittee: The purpose of this subcommittee is to use RRCUS members with the veterinary and/or research background who can help make recommendations on research grants we receive from the Canine Health Foundation. Also veterinary members of this committee are used to review articles written by lay persons on health issues to ensure the information is reasonable.

GOALS FOR 2005:

(1) Status of the Rhodesian Ridgeback Donor Advised Fund (RRDAF):

As of December 1, 2004 the balance is: \$21981.37

Contributions through October 2004: \$1635.13

As of January 4, 2005 the \$2,405.00 raised from the membership enrollment at the beginning of 2004 and a private donation of \$500.00 given to the RRCUS treasurer totaling \$2904.00 has not yet been deposited in the RRDAF.

Since we are able to raise approximately \$4000.00 via the fund raising efforts tacked onto the membership enrollment I would like to keep this practice in place.

(2) Health Survey

Upon approval of the new health survey coordinator, 2005 will be the year for a mass data collection for the health survey through The Ridgeback Newsletter. Several issues of preparatory advertisements in The Ridgeback will prepare the membership for the task and will emphasize the need to submit data in order for RRCUS to determine how best to direct our resources for research.

Efforts will be made to get the health survey on line.

(3) Research

CHF Grant 2447: Genetic Determinants of Susceptibility of Hypothyroid Disease In Dogs is the only grant CHF funded in 2004.

In addition to monetary support 24 samples from Rhodesian Ridgebacks were sent to support this study. These samples included 20 from hypothyroid dogs and 4 close relatives of one of these dogs. Samples were received by Dr. Jean Dodds for processing and preliminary thyroid screen. The samples were then sent to the United Kingdom to Dr. Lorna Kennedy where part of this study is being done. The investigators expressed their gratitude for our efforts.

We have received 3 grants from the AKC/CHF asking for assistance in funding.

Pending Grant: 0415: Anti-HLA-DR Antibody Therapy in Canine B-Cell Lymphoma (Rodney Rage, MS, DVM, Cornell University). Asking for \$2,500.

Pending Grant: 0257: Investigation of Predicators of Outcome for Canine Mast Cell Tumors (Elizabeth Whitley, DVM, PhD, Auburn University). Asking for \$2,500 over 2 years)

Pending Grant: 0373: Mapping Genes Associated with osteosarcoma In Large Dog Breeds (Kerstin Lindblad-Toh, PhD, Broad Institute) Asking for \$5,000 over 2 years.

While these are worthy grants, I have not sent these grants to the Veterinary Review and Advisory Committee yet as the dermoid sinus grant by Nicolette Salmon Hillbertz, M.Sc, for which RRCUS pledged support, has been resubmitted to the AKC/CHF and it is expected to be reviewed in January 2005. Results of that review will tell us what resources we will have remaining in the RRDAF for other grants.

(4) CHIC

The CHIC program needs a minor adjustment. In order to better define testing requirements for a CHIC certificate the fact that CERF and Thyroid exams must be repeated needs to be on the CHIC certification. This is already done by the Golden Retriever Club concerning thyroid testing. The CHIC liaison will be exploring the best intervals for CERF exams (currently annually) and at what age these can be stopped. The same will be done for thyroid testing. With BOD approval the CHIC certificate will be altered with statements explaining the requirement. CHIC is more than happy to work with us to make this work.

(5) BREEDER'S DNA INVENTORY

Prompted by discussions with Dr. Neff the DNA Liaison is working on a project that would allow breeders to collect DNA samples on their dogs and maintain these samples in their homes until such time when they might be able to be tested for a particular genetic condition. This would include not only DNA samples but also phenotype data that would be detailed enough to reference in the years to come.

The liaison will attempt to have a proposal to Board of Directors, via the Health and Genetics Chairman, in time for the January 2005 meeting but definitively in time for the Board of Directors Meeting to be held in conjunction with the 2005 National Specialty in April. The proposal will detail the advantages of this product to breeders as well as the breed, the cost of production for test marketing, and if there proves to be a market the details of long range production and sales.

REPORT OF 2004 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

In 2003 I requested \$1650.00 for 2004. While the below data will show I went over budget in 2004 I believe we will all agree the money was well spent.

Dermoid sinus fund raising: Dr. Ralston had raffle tickets printed. I am not aware of those costs.

Thyroid samples: Thyroid screening tests: \$55.00 x 24 = \$1320
Refrigerant/Containers: \$191.61 = \$ 191.61

Postage:	\$ 88.55	=	\$ 88.55
Total:	approx.		\$1616.16
Postage and stamps:			\$ 75.29
Approximate total expenditures for 2004:			\$1691.45 excluding raffle ticket printing
Over-expenditure for 2004:			\$41.45 + cost of raffle ticket printing

FUNDS FOR 2005

In 2003 I requested the following funding for 2005.

Fund raising efforts (CHF, Dermoid) -----	\$1600.00
Travel Expenses (CHF Conference) -----	\$2000.00.
Business Expenses:-----	\$ 500.00
Total:	\$4100.00

I request the following additional funding for 2005

Subsidizing confirmation of Degenerative Myelopathy diagnosis (see below)-----	\$1500.00
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Fund Raising Efforts: I will not be using \$1600.00 for fund raising since I am fund raising through the membership renewals which is considerably cheaper. \$350.00 of this money is earmarked for the DNA swabs at the National Specialty. I would like to divert the remaining funds and hold them in reserve for preliminary funding of the Breeder's DNA Inventory, and to subsidize expensive genetic testings at National Specialties, such as BAER testing.

Subsidizing Confirmation of Degenerative Myelopathy: Finally I request that an additional \$1500.00 be set aside in 2005 to help RRCUS members defray the cost of confirming degenerative myelopathy (DM) diagnoses. At this point, our health survey does not show DM to be the problem that we suspect it really is. Because of this I am not convinced we can justify to the membership pursuing a grant and then funding it from the RRDAF. The cost is the major reason diagnoses are not confirmed. On the average it will cost the owner or breeder \$500.00 to confirm DM. I am asking that \$1500.00 be set aside to assist the owners/breeder of 6 dogs in 2005 by giving them \$250.00 to offset the

cost of diagnosis after they have had the diagnosis confirmed or denied and they have completed a health survey.

The goal is to get cases of DM reported to the health survey. There have been 12 cases of DM reported to date to the health survey. Even if we only get confirmation on an additional 6 – 8 cases over the next 2 years that would give us the “statistical” strength to support pursuing research. I believe this is a relatively inexpensive way to help us determine the significance of DM in the Rhodesian Ridgeback.

Total budget request for 2005-----\$5600.00

FUNDS FOR 2006

Cancer Conference Sponsorship (see below) -----\$2500.00

Travel Expense (Cancer Conference)----- \$1000.00

Business Expenses:-----\$ 500.00

Diagnosis confirmation in dogs with presumed Degenerative
Myelopathy -----\$1500.00

Special Projects/Genetic testing subsidizing (see below)-----\$1500.00

Cancer Conference: The cancer conference occurs, generally, every other year. The AKC/CHF and the major cancer investigators in the country/world present cutting edge information to representatives of parent breed clubs for dissemination to the membership. This is also where the breed clubs interface directly with the investigators we learn how best we can support their research endeavors with sample collection. We have never attended this conference in the past. Sponsorship is a requirement to attending. There are no additional costs other than airfare for the representative.

Special Projects/Genetic Testing Subsidizing: The special projects category is a catch all that will cover projects that are similar to the thyroid sample submission project we did in 2004. As always no project would be undertaken without Board of Director Approval. A portion of these funds would also be used to subsidize expensive genetic testing at National Specialties.

Total budget request for 2006 -----\$7000.00

As always, if you have any questions feel free to contact me at houndscrest@earthlink.net or at 434-248-5018.

Cynthia Roethel
Chairman