

# DELEGATES' CANINE HEALTH COMMITTEE

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## HEALTH COMMITTEE

The Delegate Standing Committee system was established in 1993. Its purpose was to form standing committees, which would be advisory to the AKC Board of Directors. This article describes some of the efforts and accomplishments of the Delegate Canine Health Committee (the "Committee").

The first project was to create a document describing hypothyroidism in the canine. Veterinary opinions, breeding options and treatment were included in the paper. It was issued to Delegates in the form of a brochure which could be taken back to their clubs for reproduction.

The tradition of providing Delegates, and through them, member clubs and others, with useful information, began with that first effort. It continues to this day with articles provided to *Perspectives* in every quarterly publication. We solicit information from qualified outside sources, and we rely on our own knowledgeable Committee members to write for us. All of the articles which are submitted by the Committee are archived on the AKC Canine Health Foundation website and are available for reproduction by the Delegates and their clubs.

Among the earliest issues tackled by the Committee was the creation of a Canine Health Information Center (CHIC.) The AKC Board and the newly created AKC Canine Health Foundation sought information from us. It was agreed that the new database

would be a combined effort of the Canine Health Foundation and OFA. All of this occurred during the 1990s.

At the same time the Committee discussed and issued position papers on cloning and the use of multiple sires. The potential of harvesting embryos from small litter breeds, such as the Bulldog, and implanting them in other breeds was also studied. The Committee voted not to endorse the use of cloning or embryo transplants. It did, however, endorse the use of multiple sires, if confirmed by conclusive DNA testing.

Starting the new century, in 2000 the Committee recommended to the Board the establishment of an advisory committee to study the use of DNA. This committee was established and issued significant scientific papers on the subject. It eventually led to the Frequently Used Sires program.

The Committee worked with The Canine Health Foundation to develop an online health survey which clubs could use for their members. This was a major incentive for clubs to form health committees for their individual breeds.

This was also the year that the Committee worked on the AKC staff's idea for a program to reach practicing veterinarians. This led to the creation of the Veterinary Outreach Program, which has grown in importance from a small website providing information to veterinarians, to a significant pres-

ence in the veterinary community, starting with veterinary students. Through the impetus of the Canine Health Committee and corporate sponsorships, all first year veterinary students now receive *The Practical Guide to Dog Breeding*, as well as flashcards of all AKC recognized breeds. In addition, graduating veterinary students receive a copy of the *AKC Complete Dog Book*.

In 2004 the Committee developed a program to encourage breeders to use DNA to identify their breeding stock. This voluntary program was presented to the Parent Club Committee, which endorsed the concept. Follow up discussions during ensuing years have led to many Parent Clubs holding DNA identification clinics. Through the recommendation of the Health Committee, beginning in 2005, owners could put their dogs' tattoo or microchip numbers on their DNA certificates.

The Canine Health Committee in conjunction with Veterinary Outreach conducted a survey of all-breed clubs to determine how they support and interact with veterinary colleges in their area. The suggestions emanating from the survey were enhanced by Veterinary Outreach and disseminated to clubs through *Perspectives* and can be found on the Veterinary Outreach portion of the AKC website.

In 2005 the Committee asked the AKC Board to consider instituting an optional program that

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would allow participants in the DNA identification program the option of having a second sample taken which could be used for research. Nothing came of that proposal, but in 2008, with the backing of OFA and the strong support of the Canine Health Committee, the Board agreed to permit DNA identification numbers to be linked to the OFA/CHIC repository numbers.

About the same time, the Committee asked the AKC Board to appoint liaisons to AVMA in order to form a better relationship with that organization. The first two appointed were Dr. Asa Mays and Dr. Patricia Haines. That effort languished for three years until Dr. Haines and Dr. William Newman, at the urging of the Committee, established contacts, which began a new era of cooperation. Focusing on veterinary students and re-establishing an awards program for practicing

veterinarians, AKC, AKC CHF and OFA are in touch with officials in various sectors of the AVMA.

Beginning in 2007 the Committee recommended to the Events Department that Health Clinics be included as one of the requisites for clubs to hold their events. This was accepted. The Events Department also permitted Veterinary Outreach programs to count as one of the requirements for clubs to hold their shows.

The Committee began to submit articles to be included in the AKC Breeders' newsletter, *AKC Breeder*, on matters of health. This online newsletter is distributed by email to over 180,000 subscribers.

In 2008 the concept of Canine Ambassadors was introduced by OFA and OFA became a partner with the Veterinary Outreach program. This followed the successful introduction of students from 13 veterinary colleges who attended

the 2007 AKC Canine Health Foundation Parent Club Health Conference. Although the Canine Health Committee did not play a decisive role in expanding the Parent Club Health Conference to all 28 veterinary schools in 2007, the Committee was a vocal advocate for OFA, Veterinary Outreach, and AKC CHF in making it happen for the 2009 Parent Club Health Conference scheduled for this Fall.

The AKC Delegates' Canine Health Committee looks forward to another productive and exciting year. The quarterly Committee meeting always draws a large attendance. The discussions are lively and intelligent. Comments and suggestions are always welcomed. 🐾

*The AKC Canine Health Committee has approved this article and encourages its reproduction.*