

Miniature Bull Terrier Club Health Testing

I would like to thank the Miniature Bull Terrier Club for their involvement in health testing and for promoting it at their very busy Championship Show. The health officer Mrs Brenda Ford did a great job in making sure everything ran smoothly, thank you for all your help.

We had 21 dogs, males and females that had a kidney ultrasound performed for polycystic kidney disease. As last year, no dogs were found to have cysts in their kidneys which is great news. The dogs we tested can not be representative for the whole breed but it does raise the question if PKD really is present in Miniature Bull Terriers. To my knowledge, until now, there are no published case reports on this disease in this breed. On my last research I went through all the British and American veterinarian journals, and the on-line libraries: PubMed, Wiley, Science Direct, Ivis and there is no mention of it. We all know the extensive work done by the Australian breeders and veterinarians in Bull Terriers with PKD but again nothing is being mentioned about the Miniature Bull Terrier. Please, if I am wrong do correct me.

Anecdotally, there were a few cases in which renal cysts were found by ultrasonography but none of them was a definitive diagnosis. The consensus in Australia for a definitive diagnosis was that a dog must present at least three cysts between the two kidneys and one parent must be affected. Dogs can develop renal cysts for various reasons and seeing one does not make it PKD.

Some breeders, more often from continental Europe, are using the Laboklin DNA test that was developed for Bull Terriers. The test may or may not be appropriate but at the moment I feel dubious about it as not even one dog was found to be positive in either Bull Terriers or Miniature Bull Terriers. This raises a few questions: is the test good?; is it a coincidence that only clear dogs were tested?; do we have this disease in the breed?

I am not suggesting in any way that we should stop testing. As long as we test for PKD in Bull Terriers and there are interbred dogs we should, as much as we can, try to minimise the risk of this disease spreading in Miniature Bull Terriers. A kidney ultrasound is a cheap, non invasive and easy to perform test and it's good to have it done. Even more, if clubs are offering it for free it's pity to not take this opportunity.

For patella testing we had 12 dogs, from which 7 were bilaterally clear and 5 were affected to some degree. The numbers are too small to do any meaningful statistics but we do know that this is a fairly common condition in the Miniature Bull Terrier.

The inheritance of this condition is presumed to be polygenic, which means that perfectly healthy parents can produce affected dogs. A study made on Dutch Flat Coat Retrievers showed that the heritability of the disease is rather low which means that environmental factors play a large role in the manifestation of the disorder.

The same study showed that a good screening program associated with sensible selection in which not all affected dogs were removed from the breeding program lead to a decrease of the incidence from 28 % to 18%. We can not expect to reduce the incidence of this condition to zero as patella luxation is just as frequent in mongrels as in pure-breed dogs, however, breeding from one affected parent increased the prevalence of patellar luxation in the offspring with 45% compared to those from unaffected parents.