

Two paws forward, one paw back...

LAST YEAR'S LONDON VET SHOW included a session that considered the progress being made to enhance the welfare of pedigree dogs in the UK and internationally, and the impact the profession can make from the consulting room.

Introduced by BVA president Gudrun Ravetz, sponsored by Agria and delivered by Dr Brenda Bonnett, the presentation was complemented by the subsequent paper from the Kennel Club's veterinary adviser, Nick Blayney, which looked at measures introduced in the UK.

Formerly at the Ontario Veterinary College, Brenda is a veterinarian and consulting epidemiologist and since 2011 has spearheaded the creation of the International Partnership for Dogs (IPFD) and DogWellNet.com. She is the CEO of IPFD, a non-profit organisation whose mission is to facilitate collaboration and sharing of resources to enhance the welfare of dogs worldwide.

Several national Kennel Clubs in Europe and North America, including the UK and Sweden; other stakeholders in dog health such as the Agria-Swedish KC Research Fund; and collaborators such as VetCompass in the UK have made formal, on-going commitments to drive this work forward. One of IPFD's projects is the harmonisation of genetic testing for dogs.

IPFD promotes an evidence-based approach. Some of this "evidence" comes from Agria whose current footprint in the Swedish market stretches to 40% of all Swedish dogs and 23% of cats.

Agria data have been used to produce numerous peer-reviewed

scientific papers. In addition, material on the most common and high-risk conditions has been created specifically for the use by breed clubs. These data help define which conditions are the most important for a breed.

The need for this approach was highlighted following the *Pedigree Dogs Exposed* documentary and the global reaction to Syringomyelia (SM). In the period from 1995-2006, approximately 70 times as many Cavaliers died of heart disease than SM.

Brenda also referenced a paper from Vet Compass with similar findings. While not saying SM isn't important, she stresses the importance of using evidence to define priorities rather than media-driven decision-making.

In Scandinavia, the Agria data support Kennel Club and breed club breeding strategies. Breed clubs also have access to KC public-access databases linked to pedigree health data. Depending on the breeding requirement (e.g. eyes, hips or other), screening data can go back seven or eight generations – one of the benefits of a compliant and inclusive culture.

Brachycephalic dogs are currently a hot topic with the UK profession. Indeed, in September 2015 the "Vet Petition"

focused attention on health problems in these breeds. Looking at respiratory disorders, the 2009-2013 Agria data reveal a relative risk 20 times greater for brachycephalic breeds compared to all combined.

But what about the actual prevalence of brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome (BOAS) in the UK? A straw poll of vets might conclude "all are affected" while the opposing breeder view could be "they're all fine". But anecdotal opinions need to be replaced

SIMON WHEELER
of Agria Pet Insurance reports on one of the closing sessions at November's London Vet Show on the progress being made to enhance the welfare of pedigree dogs



Brenda Bonnett.

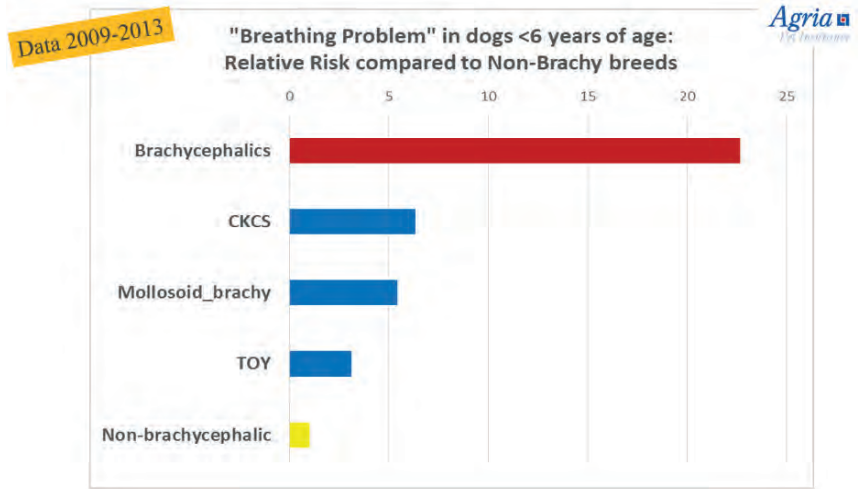
Paralympian to host marketing awards

DANNY Crates is to host the Veterinary Marketing Association (VMA) awards at the Lancaster Hotel in London on 17th March.

Claire Edmunds, who chairs the association, says he is widely considered one of the greatest British disability athletes of all time.

"Since retiring from international athletics, Danny has built a reputation as a leading motivational/inspirational speaker, delivering keynote presentations around the world," she said.

Entries for the awards close on 10th February and can be made electronically at www.vma.org.uk. Table reservations for the presentations can also be made via the website.



by evidence. Even from research, e.g. BOAS in Pugs, based on one referral hospital's data v. primary-care clinical records, there is a potential for misinterpretation of data without careful consideration of the source and differences between study populations.

Are we making a difference?

Established Surgical Registries would allow quantification of the problem directly from vets. This initiative is just starting in Sweden; a mandatory approach was not supported by the Norwegian government. Although established for years in the UK, it is also not mandatory and participation by veterinarians has been poor.

As promoted by IPFD, collaborative efforts are needed. The Nordic Kennel Union has introduced puppy certificates, pre-breeding certificates and re-evaluated breed standards. In Germany, Finland and France, fitness testing is established for various brachycephalic breeds. There is an emergence of cross-breeding health programmes, especially in Finland and Norway, for some challenged breeds.

Closer to home, UK vets,

individually and collectively, were challenged to consider their role, e.g. to educate their clients ... perhaps the snuffing/snoring in the Pug shouldn't just be dismissed as "normal" in the breed; to note compromised health in the medical records; and to participate in programmes and research that would help determine the true rate of occurrence of such problems. All marketers were asked to reconsider their habitual use of "cute" and "funny" depictions of extreme conformation in general advertising.

Brenda's full presentation together with Nick Blayney's supporting paper are available to view on Vets.tv and much of the breed-specific health data can be found at DogWellNet.com – the information hub of IPFD providing links, documents, downloads and additional resources to vets, breeders and others in the canine world.

Reference

Summers, J. F., O'Neill, D. G., Church, D. B., Thomson, P. C., McGreevy, P. D. and Brodbelt, D. C. (2015) Prevalence of disorders recorded in Cavalier King Charles Spaniels attending primary-care veterinary practices in England. *Canine Genetics and Epidemiology* 2: 4.

General causes of mortality: rates in 2006-2011

