

PROGRESSIVE RETINAL ATROPHY (PRA) IN THE ENGLISH SPRINGER SPANIEL

What is PRA ?

- It is a late onset degeneration of the retina that causes blindness.
- It is inherited through an autosomal recessive gene.
- The genetic mutation(s) responsible for PRA in English Springer Spaniels is not known

Do we ever hope to know the genetic mutation responsible for PRA ?

- Finding the mutation and producing a DNA test is the main goal of a research initiative being carried out by The Animal Health Trust, Newmarket (*Dr Cathryn Mellersh/Dr Nigel Holmes +44(0)1638 750659*). The AHT will happily arrange to store the blood samples, free of charge, from those ESS who have been clinically diagnosed with PRA, together with blood samples from their parents and sibling, if available, for inclusion in the Research Project
- It is the Breed's goal to develop a genetic (DNA) test for PRA in the ESS, so that affected and carrier animals can be detected quite early in their lives, before they are committed to breeding programmes
- Breeders will then know whether their stock is genetically clear, carrier or affected, and can make decisions accordingly.

How can I tell if my dog is affected by PRA?

- You need the help of a specialist Ophthalmologist and you should take your English Springer to be tested every 12 months to either a KC/BVA Panellist or ECVO/AHT Diplomate. (*A list of these Practitioners is available from your Health Co-ordinators**).
- Unfortunately, until a genetic (DNA) test is available to indicate if an English Springer Spaniel is affected with, or is a carrier for or clear of PRA, all ESS breeders/owners are advised to follow Breed Club 'Ethical Guidelines' and to annually use approved Eye Schemes* (*KC/BVA/ISDS, ECVO and AHT*) to find out the clinical status of their stock.

How can I prove to interested parties that my Dog has had its eyes examined annually?

- ESS Breeders/Owners in the UK who use approved Eye Schemes* will be issued with a dated and signed Certificate and will have the results published in the Quarterly issue of the KC Breed Records Supplement (BRS).
- ESS Breeders/Owners from other countries will have results published on equivalent lists (Rasdata, CERF etc)
- ESS Breeders/Owners who do not use approved Eye Schemes will not have their results published and valuable research data will be lost.

If my English Springer Spaniel is proved to be a 'carrier,' will I be able to use it for breeding?

- Contrary to what it is frequently believed, once breeders know the genetic status of their stock, there should be no reason why initially genetic carriers cannot be used on genetically clear stock, in order not to sacrifice excellent breed points and without the need to "throw the baby out with the bath water",

What can I do now to help with the search for a DNA Test for PRA?

- It is hoped that understanding these facts should encourage owners and breeders to feel more comfortable about revealing the clinical eye status of their stock and submitting a blood sample to the AHT for storage for the research project.

Brief explanation of terms:

Genetic status: The dog's DNA indicates whether it is affected, carrier or clear for the disease for which it has been clinically examined or tested

Affected: The dog has the disease for which it has been clinically examined or tested

Carrier: The dog is free from the disease for which it has been clinically examined or tested, but is carrying the gene that will pass on the disease to its progeny

Clear: The dog does not have the disease, nor does it carry the gene for the disease for which it has been clinically examined or tested

Help and further information on PRA can be obtained **in confidence**
from the ESS Breed Clubs* Health Co-ordinators:

Lesley Bloomfield Tel: 01923 823579 Fax: 01923 836130 Email: lesley@fernlin.free-online.co.uk

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Or Check Websites: www.englishspringer.org/www.sesss.org for further information.