HEALTH REPORT 2019

I would like to start with good news, your Club has an excellent specific Health Website in addition to the Club Website. The Health Website is as comprehensive as we can make it, but if you have any health queries that are not addressed on there or anything you think it would be helpful to all otterhound owners to add, do get in touch and we will do our utmost to find the best answer for you and also add it to the conditions already covered.

Unfortunately we have had several cases of cancer reported including severe fatal cases of Cancer and they cover a range of different cancers. The fatalities were large bleeding tumour on the spleen age 11, very aggressive lymphoma age 9.

Other unhappy losses have been due to liver shunts combined with a cyst on the liver with roots so deep it was inoperable. A case of primary cataract, which was said to be hereditary, but this was the first case of this kind that I had heard of. A case of Gastric Torsion and a case of Chronic kidney disease, which at the time of writing I am uncertain about the cause.

I am sure you will have all heard about the young hound who had some kind of very unfortunate happening at the beginning of October 2018 which has paralysed his lower spine and hind legs and we all wish him and his owners well and hope he will get back to full health.

For your information I am including some articles in this year's report that I hope you will find interesting. The first one is an article written for us by our Otterhound owning Vet on the precautions you need to be aware of when you are travelling abroad with your hound :-

For many years the UK was kept free of 'exotic' disease of its animals and livestock by virtue of it being an island and strict quarantine laws.
In 2000 the Pets Travel Scheme (PETS) was introduced allowing movement of dogs and cats between certain countries without a need for quarantine.

Since then there has been an increasing number of animals returning to or being imported into the UK with diseases previously unseen in this country- viral, bacterial and parasitic. The veterinary profession in the UK expressed it's concerns regarding this increased movement of animals and, unfortunately, their predictions have been confirmed. There are approximately 100,000 dogs and cats enter the UK each year from abroad. This trend is expected to increase for the immediate future as is the increase of imported disease.
Many of these diseases are caught abroad but now we have many which are established in the UK and can be caught by animals which have never been out of the UK and some are even transmissible to humans.

Rabies is caused by a virus and is probably the one of which we are most afraid as it can affect any warm blooded mammals. it affects the nervous system and brain. It is caught by bites or scratches from an infected animal or even being licked on an open wound. Once symptoms develop it is invariable fatal but treatment before signs show can be very effective.

Many of the other diseases are parasitic, often bloodborne parasites, and many can cause life threatening diseases. There is no way of telling on a physical examination whether a dog is carrying most parasites and blood and/or faeces checks would have to be undertaken.

Many diseases are transmitted by biting insects such as sandflies and ticks. An infected animal is bitten by the insect, the insect gets the microscopic parasite on its biting parts and passes it on to the next animal it bites. We don't have sandflies in UK but we have no reason to believe that other biting insect such as ticks and mosquitos could not become vectors for transmission and as climate change makes UK warmer we have a greater potential for these insects to thrive and breed.
Leishmmaniais has been introduced to, and travelled across, many states in the US where there are no sandflies and the vector has not yet been identified.

Recently the Brown Tick (Rhipicephalus) was found in the wild in south east England for the first time. The UK regulations requiring compulsory treatment for ticks prior to dogs entering the UK was lifted in 2012 and they have been brought to the UK from, probably, Europe. These ticks carry Babesiosis and in the last year there has been a cluster of dogs suffering from Babesiosis in UK and several of these dogs have died.

PETS legislation has always been to protect human health rather than animal health so even following the guidelines will not guarentee the health of animals travelling abroad.

We have now had the first cases of Thelazia (eye worm), Dirofilaria repens (cutaneous worm) and Linguatula (nasal worm) in the UK
There is the potential for some of these parasites to become established in UK and possibly infect wildlife.

Vets are now being advised to carry out blood testing for tick borne diseases on imported pets.

Heart worm is another parasite which we supposedly do not have in UK but I cannot believe is not here yet – it just hasn't been diagnosed.

Some of these diseases are treatable but in many cases we have to acquire a Special Import Licence to import the drugs from abroad as it is not available in the UK.

UK vets have now to be aware of parasites and diseases in other countries and recognise the significance of any clinical signs with which the dog presents.

I have a single handed practice so one of the smallest in the UK and in the past 12 months I have treated a dog from Romania which we suspected had Linguatula but turned out to have a bacterial disease which was not sensitive to any of our antibiotics and it's elderly owner ended up in isolation in hospital and I am currently treating the first case of cutaneous Leishmaniasis I have seen, in nearly 40 years of veterinary practice, in a dog which has been in the UK 2years after being brought from a shelter in Spain.

If you intend to travel abroad with your dog or import a dog from abroad it is advisable to contact your vet, ideally at least a month prior, with as many details as you have about the animal and the itinerary. Also to check the microchip is reading correctly. Recommendations may change so previous information may no longer be valid.

Further information on travelling with dogs in Europe see ESCAAP (European Scientific Council Companion Animal Parasites) website.

Will Lazenby BVMS, MRCVS

HEALTH CO-ORDINATOR'S FOOTNOTE : IT IS CURRENTLY ADVISABLE TO CONTACT YOUR VETERINARY SURGEON 3 MONTHS BEFORE TRAVELLING ABROAD WITH YOUR HOUND WITH ALL THE CURRENT UNCERTAINTY AS TO PET TRAVEL TO EUROPE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

GIVE A DOG A GENOME UPDATE.

Researching the canine genome

Give a Dog a Genome is a pioneering project which is making the genetic mutation-finding process quicker and more efficient by creating a 'canine genome bank', so that we can develop more DNA tests and help even more dogs. Using new whole genome sequencing technology to sequence the genome (all the DNA required to 'make a dog', of which there are 2.4 billion letters of DNA!) of 85 different dogs (from 77 different breeds in total) these data make up the UK's largest canine genome bank.

Once fully analysed by our team, all of this information will significantly further our understanding of which changes in the canine genome are neutral and which have a negative effect on dog health, aiding all future canine genetics research projects. This is already helping to speed up our research and will be a permanent resource which will help other researchers around the world, as we publish what we learn. Give a Dog a Genome launched in 2016 with significant funding from the Kennel Club Charitable Trust.

All of the breeds involved in the project have completed a health questionnaire and submitted a DNA sample to be whole genome sequenced and included in the project. The idea is that the more whole genome samples we have that we know have been analysed in detail, the more information we have to help us find new disease-causing mutations. All of the samples have been sequenced and are now ready for analysis. Even with sophisticated computer technology it will take us years to fully analyse all of the whole genome sequence data, as each genome is 2.4 billion letters long which, if read like a book, would be equivalent to reading the Harry Potter series 440 times per genome!

Finally should you wish to discuss any health matter at any time please do not hesitate to contact myself or the two members of your Health Committee at any time, we are always happy to do all we can to help or take up any health subject that you feel should be researched for the breed. Thankyou.

Judith Ashworth

Breed Health Co-Ordinator.