

Dear PON friends

This letter is from the Breeding committee of the Finnish PON Club. We would like to express our concern about the appearance of PRA in the PON.

It has come to our knowledge that PRA appears in the PON in many countries and in many blood lines. We fear that it could be a wide-spread problem in our beloved breed.

The problem with PRA is that it is usually not seen in young PONs. One PON dog can be declared to be healthy in an eye examination several times in his life and still develop PRA later. It seems PRA often is visible in eye examination when the dog is 6-10 years of age.

PRA stands for progressive retinal atrophy. It causes at first night blindness: the dog cannot see well in the dark. As it progresses, also tunnel vision appears: the area that the dog sees gets smaller and smaller from the sides (like looking through a tunnel). In final stage of PRA also cataract often appears in the eyes and causes the dog to go blind. There is no way to cure or slow down the progress of PRA.

Because it seems that PRA appears in several PON bloodlines, we think we have to fight this illness all together. We want to invite all breeders and owners of PONs around the world to participate!

So far there is no DNA test developed for PRA in the PON. DNA tests developed for other breeds with PRA cannot be used for the PON.

With a DNA test we could know the situation of PRA already in young puppies. With the help of a DNA test also dogs who are carriers of PRA could be use in breeding, combined to a non-carrier. With the help of a DNA test we could "out-breed" this illness in the future. Therefore, getting a DNA test for PRA in the PON is extremely important.

What can You do to help? Our wish is to have as many middle-aged and old PONs as possible to go to eye examinations, in all countries, around the world. If your PON is diagnosed with PRA, we ask you to publish this information and have a DNA sample of your dog sent to Michigan University in the USA. They need DNA samples from affected dogs to develop the DNA test to benefit us all.

Sharing information is the key to fight this illness in our lovely breed. We have published a list of dogs with PRA on our Club's website:

http://www.pon.fi/PRA_pedigrees.pdf

In Scandinavian countries the national Kennel Clubs keep a public registry of all examination results. In addition to this, several dog owners and breeders have given their permission to publish the information of their dogs. Being open about all information is significant in fighting PRA. We hope that there will be no accusations or finger-pointing; instead we invite you all to participate in this challenge.

Please feel free to contact us for more information or to share your information. We will not publish any information without your permission.

Thank You for your co-operation. Let's work together to create healthier PONs in the future!

February 26, 2011

Breeding committee of Finnish PON Club

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