

Canine Genetics Noise Phobia Study

As many of you are aware, researchers from the Hamilton Lab Canine Genetics project at the University of California, San Francisco attended the BCCA National specialty this year. They were there to collect blood samples for their study of Noise Phobia. They collected 30 blood specimens and were pleased with the response. However, their goal is to accumulate at least 50 unrelated affected dogs and 50 unrelated controls - so they have a long way to go. They would also like to add as many members of a single related Bearded Collie family as possible to their study. If you would be interested in participating visit their website at:

<http://www.k9behavioralgenetics.com/NoisePhobia.php>

Get set up with an account number and then next time you see your vet have him/her draw an extra few mls of blood for the study. Noise phobia is one of the most common problems reported in the open health registry. Please help us find out whether or not it is genetic in beardies as it is in Border collies and Australian Shepherds.

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Health

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Reflections Elsa Sell

In this time of economic turmoil and mostly unpleasant news in the media, I contemplate something more enjoyable - life with Beardies and among Beardie people. The well adjusted Beardie gives unconditionally to his or her people and often to others sometimes without invitation. It is less common for the people to give unconditionally to the collective group. I would like to recognize two such individuals, both involved with this newsletter which

reaches over 1900 people.

First is John Wilkins, artist of the famed MacLean and Company Beardie cartoons. Since Lighting the Way was first published in 2001, John has provided a health focused Beardie cartoon for the newsletter. They include:

Advice to Puppy about Measuring Temperature

Toenail Cutting

Tooth Scaling

Veggies

Eye Chart – CERF (Can Easily Recognize Food)

Nails – Poodle and Beardie

Tail injury from rocking chair

Riding a Skateboard

Family Tree

Directory – nose print

Athlete's paw

Sheep fleas (fleece) cut off each year

John very generously sketches for us while he maintains his life and other responsibilities. If you missed any of these cartoons, see BeaCon's web site, the newsletter link. The board of directors thanks John for these masterful cartoons in the newsletter and his donation of the prints for BeaCon's auctions. Please thank John when you have the opportunity.

Second is Gordon Fitzgerald. Fitz has made a lasting impact on BeaCon as the newsletter's editor. Fitz was on BeaCon's board of directors for some years during which time he got us started with the newsletter and volunteered to be editor. In this capacity he

gathers articles, arranges the material, makes those long tables come together when the software is recalcitrant, asks questions of authors, provides a draft of the newsletter for input from the entire board, maintains both an email and a snail mail mailing list for people all over the globe, and arranges with the printer to get the issue out in a timely fashion. Along the way Fitz's efforts were rewarded with the 2005 Maxwell Award from the Dog Writers Association of America in the National Club Newsletter Category. The lovely award is framed and hangs in Fitz's home.

All this is done in addition to Fitz's regular life. Most recently he purchased the business where the newsletter is printed. Not only has he committed to continue editing the newsletter, he has made an extraordinarily generous offer to BeaCon's directors. Fitz will cover the printing and assembly costs completely! BeaCon's costs will be reduced to mailing the snail mail issues, thus preserving funds for research and avoiding the need for readers to subscribe, even though some readers agreed to a nominal subscription fee in a recent survey. We are deeply moved by Fitz's charity and ask readers to thank Fitz when you can.

Memorials. If you have a deceased Beardie in BeaCon's open health registry, you may have a memorial posted on BeaCon's web site. You just need to send a statement, poem, or paragraph about your dear Beardie, along with a photo to beaconbb@bellsouth.net. Your memorial will be posted on the home page for approximately one month and then, permanently on the memorial page. Yes, I

know, it is a very emotional thing for an owner to think of their departed Beardie – but for some, placing a memorial brings some degree of closure as well as honoring your dog. This is a free service.

SLO. The first phase of a study on symmetrical lupoid onychodystrophy (SLO) is underway. See the article for more details.

Behavior and Temperament. Various behavioral issues are often reported in BeaCon's open health registry. For example, it was reported last year that 147 Beardies experienced fear of loud, sharp sounds; that was the leading problem (15.3% of all dogs) reported. Some years ago a brief survey on BDL also revealed that sound sensitivity was a problem. In the OHR, other fear problems as well as aggression are being reported. Thus, it seems that there would benefit by mulling over the topic of behavior and temperament and various factors that might be contributory. I invite both long time breeders and those who have studied the topic to send material for future newsletters. Not everyone will agree with the ideas; the important point is that readers will think about the subject.



So What *is* a Beardie Temperament? Copyright – Lynne Sharpe

Ask any proud Beardie owner about his dog's temperament and he is likely to answer at once, "Oh, he has a *wonderful* temperament." But his idea of a 'wonderful temperament' may not be yours. And

since the Beardie's temperament is his most important characteristic, it is worth looking more closely at what it is - or should be.

The Kennel Club Standard describes the Beardie as "alert, lively, self-confident and active" and as a "steady, intelligent working dog, with no signs of nervousness or aggression."

All of these are important in the Beardie but the description could equally well fit many of the working breeds, from terrier to gundog. It says nothing about the particular qualities that the Beardie needs to do his particular work. Nor does the standard describe the characteristics that make the Beardie different, not only from the terrier and gundog but from the other herding breeds as well. After all, if the Beardie were just a poor relation to the much more numerous Border Collie he would not have survived as he has, as a highly-prized worker on hill farms in England, Scotland and Wales.

My family had a Border Collie when I was a child and as a twelve-year-old I joined the local dog-training club with him. Most of the members were serious competitors in obedience and almost all of the dogs were Border Collies or German Shepherds. With the help of the trainers my Collie and I were soon competing too and winning some novice competitions but I had already fallen in love with Mrs Willison's Bothkennar Beardies, who also trained at the club. And what I loved about the Beardies was their *difference*. The workaholic, robotic Border Collies, and the serious-minded German Shepherds who seemed to have no sense of fun, might win competitions but I knew that the laughing, loving

Beardie was the breed for me.

I especially loved the way that the Beardies watched their owners so intently, eager to pick up any signal as to what was required but were also delighted to talk to their other admirers - including me. I was delighted, too, by the sense of *fun* with which they worked - as if the whole thing was a bit of a joke - but a joke they were happy to share. I heard the Collie and Shepherd trainers shout commands like drill-sergeants and saw their dogs obey with military precision but I didn't want to shout orders at my dog. I wanted him to be my friend and partner, not my slave.

In 1962 I bought a Beardie puppy of my own and I trained him at the same club. We competed very successfully against the other breeds but what we enjoyed most was thinking up new games and tricks for ourselves. The incident that made me decide to give up obedience competitions is a good illustration of the Beardie character. We were competing in an obedience test on a very hot day in July. In spite of the heat, Brett had worked well and we had only the 'stay' left to do. All the dogs had to be left in a line in the ring, in the full heat of the sun, while the handlers disappeared out of sight. I felt very guilty about asking my dog to lie in the hot sun - winning the competition suddenly seemed a very silly goal..... When we returned to the ring I was overjoyed to find that Brett had solved the problem himself. He was still lying in the ring but he had moved a few yards to occupy the only patch of shade - under the judge's table! No marks from the judge but top marks from me for using the Beardie ability to understand what is required and

to use his own initiative to do it in the best way as a true partner.

More than forty years later I was reminded of this incident when Elan Jim (a working Beardie from a farm in mid-Wales) came to stay with us in order to mate my bitch Nan. On Jim's first morning with us I went to attend to my horses, accompanied as always by the Beardies. Since Jim was a newcomer I was anxious not to let him out of my sight, so when I went into the stables I tied him on a rope in the yard. Having finished in the stables, I went to untie Jim, who was still sitting exactly where I had left him - only to find that the rope had been bitten in half. Jim understood that I wanted him to wait in the yard and he was happy to do so - but he didn't see any need for the rope! Of course he had his freedom after that and although he had never been away from his home before he was the perfect guest.

This ability to think and act as a real partner is one of the qualities that I most value in my present family of Beardies - all of them descended from Brett and five of them daughters of Jim as well.

It is this same quality that makes the Beardie so valuable to the hill shepherd whose sheep are scattered over large areas of mountainous land and often hidden among bracken and gorse. What is needed here is not the trials-winning Border Collie whose every move is controlled by a whistle or call but a dog who understands what is needed and can take control of the situation himself, searching out the hidden sheep far beyond the shepherd's sight and coping with any

problems as they arise.

Let me now try to analyse the ideal Beardie character. Of course he must have all the traits listed in the K.C. Standard: he must be 'alert, lively, self-confident and active' as well as being a 'steady, intelligent working dog, with no signs of nervousness or aggression.' But in addition to all this, what makes the Beardie character special is a combination of two crucial elements. Firstly he has a great desire to be approved of and accepted as a member of a partnership, family or group and he achieves this by being extremely sensitive to the moods, actions and demands of his people and doing his best to conform. But his ability to be a good companion or working partner goes beyond a mere willingness to conform because the second element of his character is his extraordinary ability to think for himself, to solve problems and to work independently.

It is essential that the Beardie has *both* these characteristics. Sensitivity and a desire for approval without intelligence and self-confidence result in an over-anxious dog, too dependent on his people. On the other hand, intelligence and self-confidence without sensitivity and a desire for approval result in a head-strong dog who is difficult to train or even to control. There are many Beardies who fall into one or other of these categories.

Since the ideal Beardie temperament is so complex and depends on the co-existence of so many different traits, its preservation can obviously not be left to chance but must be selectively bred for. For me it is

by far the most important consideration in my breeding programme - followed by good health, longevity, sound conformation and correct coat, which will help to ensure that my ideal companion enjoys a long life that is healthy, happy and active.

Some will argue that behaviour is influenced more by training than by genetic inheritance but this has not been my experience. When, some years ago, I started to find undesirable traits, such as nervousness and lack of intelligence, appearing in some of my puppies, I could not blame environmental factors since I was rearing them in just the same way as before. The problem was that the traditional Beardie temperament was becoming rare among KC registered dogs bred mainly for show and I could no longer find stud dogs with the character I wanted. The answer was to turn to the unregistered working Beardies and for my last three generations I have used only stud dogs chosen from these lines. The result is that I have firmly re-established my ideal temperament in my Brambledale line.

The special character that makes the Beardie so valuable to the hill shepherd also makes him ideal as an intelligent, active, devoted companion and family member. But he deserves an intelligent, active, devoted owner who appreciates his special character and will let him express it. Sadly this is not the case with many modern Beardie owners - especially those involved in the show world, whose dogs seem to spend most of their time either on a grooming table or in a cage. These are the people who objected so strongly to my suggestion that the show Beardies

could benefit from the introduction of working blood into the KC registered lines. The committee of the Bearded Collie Club even wrote to the KC claiming that “Working Beardies have many undesirable traits” including “ temperaments that do not make them good family pets.”

Yet the development of the Beardie as a popular show dog and companion, started by Mrs. Willison in the 1940s and `50s, resulted from her enthusiasm for the *character* of the farm-bred dogs that became the nucleus of her breeding programme. She wrote of her first Beardie that “...Jeannie was not only more lovable than any dog I had ever known but she had an uncanny intelligence.....” When I, as a child, had the privilege of getting to know those first Bothken-nars, it was this special character that won my heart too.

So if working-bred Beardies made wonderful family companions fifty years ago, why should they now be regarded as unsuitable for this role? The answer, I think, is quite simple: it is not the character of the working Beardie that has changed but the character of modern family life. Growing up near Mrs Willison in the 1940s and `50s, my siblings and I were typical of our time. We spent most of our spare time exploring the local woods and fields, building ‘camps’, climbing trees and fishing in streams - always accompanied by the family dogs, of course. Importantly, our mother was at home all day and happy to have the company of the animals when we were at school.

By contrast, most modern families seem to live in-

doors, occupied with computers or television. With both parents working and children at school the pet dog is left alone all day, often confined to a small house or even a cage. This is not an adequate life for any dog: for an active, intelligent and loving working breed it is serious cruelty.

If dogs are to be condemned to live like this, perhaps it is better that they should be selectively bred for dull minds and idle bodies. Their owners might assure us of their “wonderful temperaments” - but let no one pretend that they are anything but a travesty of the real Beardie.

January 2008

(This article was previously published in the Beardie Revue in German, March 2008).

Note from E. Sell. In correspondence with Lynne I came across another example of her working-Beardies’ manners. She wrote about visiting a veterinary ophthalmologist. The trip was especially pleasing because of the reaction of the examiner who met the Beardies for the first time. Lynne says one of her eccentricities is a refusal to put leads on her Beardies in the belief that if the temperament is right, a lead is superfluous. They arrived to a busy waiting room and caused a bit of a stir because all six bitches tramped politely in behind her and settled themselves quietly around her chair. Then they went into the exam room and each of the girls greeted the examiner before hopping up on the table as requested. My thought is – wow: could I do that with my group of Beardie girls? Could you?

I have also learned that another accomplishment of her breeding program has been the elimination of over-sensitivity to noise (published in an article titled "Changing Times" in the SCBCC Beardie Times, spring 2005).

That is known to be a common problem for Beardies as reported to BeaCon's open health registry. So some may wish to mull over the fact that temperament is malleable and influenced in part by the selection of sire and dam. There are other variables to also consider; we'll address another of those in the spring newsletter.

Lynne participates in BeaCon's open health registry and provides copies of the veterinary exam results for documentation. You may search for the information in the registry or visit Lynne's new web site where the Changing Times article is to be found - <http://www.spanglefish.com/brambledalebeardedcollies/>

Heat Lamps and Fire

Linda Aronson, DVM (as posted on BDL)

Today we had a fire and it could have been a tragedy. I wanted to let everyone know what happened, because it came as a shock to me.

Because we didn't want to turn the heat on in the house but have had some chilly nights I had rigged up my puppy heat lamp over the parrot's cage so that he would not get cold. We've done this before. The arm

of the lamp is secured over the top of a speaker above his cage which is in the kitchen, the lamp hangs from the hook, and while I did worry about dogs banging into the cord, it is pretty tight to the wall and goes straight up, they never had and I was sure if they did the arm would clatter down and alert us.

My husband left for work, and all but one of the dogs and the cat were upstairs with me. I came downstairs not three minutes later, I smelled smoke. Either the dog or cat must, in that short time, have stumbled into the cord and knocked the lamp down, but the hook and stand hadn't shifted at all! In that short time the lamp had burned through the oak floor and into the sub-flooring. I instantly unplugged the lamp and removed it. I then called the fire department as I was worried there might be some smoldering. Lucky it was a holiday as ours is a volunteer department, and they were here in about 5 minutes. The heat in the floor was still intense. Even when they had removed the burnt wood and doused the area with water, they were still registering close to 200 F. There was never enough smoke to set off the smoke detector. (The parrot was making smoke detector beeping, and fooled the firemen into thinking that was what they were hearing!)

Many breeders set up heat lamps for the first couple of weeks of puppies' lives. They are often over wooden or plastic whelping boxes or flammable bedding. I won't be replacing my heat lamp. I'll find another heater for the bird, I rarely used it for the puppies, just when the bitch was away and it was cold out. The photographer for the fire department was

telling me about some other freak fires - his cat had turned on an old stove in his basement and set it on fire, dozens of dryer fires, heat lamps for small rodents and fish. We hear the warnings, but what was scary was the speed with which this all happened. Even the firemen were amazed. If I'd stayed upstairs a little longer or left the house, and I have although the dogs are kept in runs when we're all gone, I might have lost all my animals, my house and not be writing to tell everyone my experience.

Since the post I have heard of two houses burnt to the ground as a result of heat lamp fires. In one all people and animals perished. In the other the breeder's mother escaped with the 11 puppies, but they died one by one of smoke inhalation. All the adult bitches and other animals died in the fire. In one a garage and puppies burned to the ground. The one happy ending, the bitch moved all her puppies to the owner's bed. The owner found her doing this and was able to put out the fire with minimal damage. I had a lot of other stories about other bizarre causes of fires. The oddest resulted when children tied a bow on the tail of the pet rat. That resulted in total loss of the house too.

Open Health Registry Update Elsa Sell

Update notices will be sent by email (or regular mail if you don't have an email addy listed) in January 2009 to owners who have one or more living Beardies in the registry (living as of the last time the dog was up-

dated). Please respond promptly to the notice and log in to update your personal and your dog's information. If there has been no change in the dog(s)' health, please enter the words "no change" in the "update notes" field on the dog's home page. That simple step gives the most current view of health conditions and wellness.

The procedure for updating all forms is:
Review what is in the database (this is the first screen that comes up when you click on a link – e.g., dog home) for yourself, the dog's home page, or any of the sub pages such as health problem, health screening, etc.

Scroll to the bottom of the screen and click the button that says "click here to modify this data".
The next screen shows the same data in a form where you can change or add information.

When finished, scroll to the bottom of the screen and click the button "click here to modify this data". **This click is what sends the new data to the database. If you don't click, the old data stay there and the data you recently entered goes nowhere!** You will see the new data after clicking the button.

The cumulative data will be collated in February and a complete report will be available on-line with highlights in the spring newsletter.

If you haven't reviewed your dog's pedigree please do so and let me know if you find any errors. These pedigrees are generated off-line (i.e., they are not auto-

matically created when you enter sire and dam name). Thus it can be a day or several weeks before the pedigree is posted. I acknowledge entry of new dogs into the registry and also notify owners a pedigree is posted.



Symmetrical Lupoid Onychodystrophy (SLO) **Cindy Alspaugh, Elsa Sell & Judy Howard**

BeaCon is, for the second time, conducting a survey on SLO. For most owners the survey will be completed by telephone interview. This is the first step in what we expect to be a research project on SLO in Bearded Collies. Dogs included have SLO diagnosed with a claw biopsy or have had a chronic nail problem that improved with treatment for SLO.

The survey addresses various environmental factors, vaccination history, diagnosis, treatment, and family history. After the initial surveys are completed, breeders will be contacted -- with owner permission -- to learn about parent and littermate medical status. A control group will also be surveyed for comparison on the various factors.

Interviews in the USA will be conducted by Judy Howard or Cindy Alspaugh, in the UK by Jo Tucker, in the Czech Republic by Jana Jezkova, and in the Netherlands by Petra Glorie beginning the first week in November. For those in other countries, we'll find a way for you to participate – just let us know you have a

dog with this problem by contacting Cindy Alspaugh (stonebaybeardies@yahoo.com).

SLO has been studied in Norwegian Gordon and English Setters and a paper was published just this year (Veterinary Dermatology **19**: 88-94). It showed that the disease was clinically and microscopically similar to what is reported in other breeds. Treatment results were also similar to those reported by others; namely, improvement in the nails, yet not a return to normal claws.

The study was rigorous in that the diagnosis had to be made with a claw biopsy. There were 18 Gordon and four English setters. Onset was a median of 4 years (range 2-7 years) and it was not correlated with vaccination time. There were no sex differences. Six of the affected dogs also had siblings with the disease. Only two had regrowth of normal claws. Seventeen dogs had persistent clinical signs that typically were nonpainful during therapy which in most dogs consisted of fatty acid supplementation or prednisolone.

Seven owners reported that they had first noticed the problem during the hunting season in August-September. Owners did not recognize a seasonal pattern nor a correlation between recurrent ear infection, conjunctivitis or superficial pyoderma and onset of the nail problem. Also there wasn't a relationship between stress, estrous, or hunting.

Whether we will find similar results in Bearded Collies remains to be learned. We encourage breeders and

owners alike to be of assistance in the effort now underway.

Announcement

BeaCon is discontinuing the liaison newsletter designed for members of regional Beardie clubs because there has been no feedback and no questions from members and thus we have no way to know if the effort was useful. Elsa (editor) and Judy (co-editor) want to thank those liaisons who made the effort. We invite liaisons to share Lighting The Way with their club members instead.

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Please contact the Board if you have any ideas, questions, problems or wish to participate in any of BeaCon's ongoing projects.

Visit BeaCon on the web at
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MacLean and Company



The Christmas tree top 'Angel?'