

I usually don't post on most of the discussions just because of the over the top reactions that seem to follow expressing one's opinion. However, I'm coming out of lurk mode here now, because I just hate to see how heated some of the discussions of this topic are becoming. My post is not directed at one side or the other, since both sides have been guilty of what I consider to be bad behavior.

I have been reading and digesting views on the "backcross project" since we've been talking about it. I entered into this discussion without any baggage from the original vote on whether or not to allow AKC registration of the LUA dals (I was not a member of DCA back then). I've been trying to look objectively at the project and think how could we move forward on it and yet meet the goals of the breeders who have objections to it. Life is not black and white; there are many times shades of gray. I think one of the things that I've learned as an adult as a result of working with clients and employees at our hospital, is that sometimes a compromise may be the best way to go, so that everyone gets some of what they desire. It's not a perfect world and none of us have any perfect dals. All of us have goals and ideals, but at times in making decisions, we have to decide which criteria are the most important to us.

In making breeding decisions in the past, I've had to select mates for my dals that are not perfect in every area. I think the most important things in selecting who to breed to are (in decreasing order of importance): health issues, temperament, conformation and gait, and spotting. Being a breeder and a veterinarian, I try to breed a dog that will be a healthy and loving member of a family for many years to come. As a veterinarian, I don't feel that we have a breed that is relatively health issue free. After all, we have deafness, uric acid stones, hip dysplasia, hypothyroidism, iris dysplasia, allergies, seizures, and copper toxicity, just to mention a few of the more common diseases. As a fancy as a whole, we are to be complemented on working towards routine health clearance tests as a routine part of our breeding process. I think though that we really need to actively investigate the possibility of reducing the uric acid levels in our dogs.

I know in this discussion, statements have been made that reducing the uric acid levels is not the solution to the problem.

I agree that high uric acid levels by themselves are not the whole cause of a case of urinary blockage. I agree that there are many factors most likely involved. However, as a veterinarian, I know that in other disease states, that if you reduce one of the factors, you will lower the process below a threshold level and as a result achieve clinical control of the problem. This is the case in treatment of allergies such as atopy. Animals (and people) are most of the time allergic to many things. When an allergist treats a patient with a desensitization protocol, they are desensitizing the patient to only a group of allergens that the patient is allergic to. By decreasing the patient's reaction to that specific cluster of allergens (but not to all of the allergens that the patient is allergic to), the doctor lowers the allergy threshold and achieves clinical improvement in that patient. I believe this could also work for us in the area of uric acid stones.

Most of us preach to our new puppy owners that type of diet, water intake, and exercise and voiding are the keys to preventing stones in our breed. However, there are cases where the owners have done everything right and the dog still gets stones. We are also plagued by the fact too that no matter how much you preach to new dal owners, they don't always do everything you tell them to do (this also happens to vets too!). So, despite your best efforts to educate new owners and prevent problems in their new dal pet, some dogs will suffer because people get lax (either because they just get too busy and let things slide or they just thought it wasn't that important).

As our economy takes a down turn and things get financially tighter for most families, the decision of whether to treat a blocked dal or not may result in more being put to sleep because the family cannot financially afford it. When it comes to whether their children or their dogs have to do without, who do you think will end up losing most of the time?

I would suggest to vote "Yes" on the ballot to "Allow the DCA to DISCUSS the possibility of AKC registration of the descendants of the Dalmatian-Pointer cross". Again, the key word here is DISCUSS (this vote does not deal with the topic of AKC registration of the backcross dals). I think that as a fancy, if we could come up with guidelines by which the LUA project could be setup and monitored, that we could accomplish an end result that would be satisfactory for most of our members. Having been schooled with a heavy background in science (but not claiming to be an expert in research), I know that for a research project to be considered valid, you must reduce the variables as much as possible, so that you know that the results are directly caused by the things that you are researching. If the breeders involved in the LUA project could work with other breeders in the fancy to come up with a set of guidelines to provide consistency of results (ie. similar diets, water intake, access to exercise, etc.) and also what health clearance tests will be done on the LUA dals (and on what time schedule), I believe the results of the project would be more palatable to those who have objections. Perhaps, a committee (with members from both sides of the fence) could be set up within the DCA to investigate and set up these parameters.

A lot has been said about the spotting of the LUA dals. Yes, there are some with less than desirable spotting. However, as was said before, a lot of us have some dogs that are not perfectly spotted either. I still feel that the backcross project, with the limited number of dogs involved in the past, is still in it's infancy. Don't expect perfection overnight. There are more important issues here than just the spotting. I'm not saying that we should not strive to achieve the goals of our standard. Just don't make the standard the whole focus of your breeding program. Think about the health issues too. And be a little more patient when evaluating the results of the project.

As has been referred to in the past, our breed is suffering from a limited gene pool. Starting up a viable pool of LUA dals will require breeding those existing with as varied a number of pedigrees

as possible in order to improve the hybrid vigor of those produced. I personally don't have a problem with registration of the LUA dals with the AKC (as long as there is some notation in the registration which denotes it as such). One pointer in 11 generations does not cause me great concern. All breeds are a combination of some foundation breeds and along the way have had other things added in to achieve the desired result.

In response to the concern that the pointer could be bringing in new hereditary diseases, periodic monitoring of the offspring of the LUA dals for these diseases could be done and the results recorded so that this could be evaluated. Whether or not to use these LUA dals in your breeding program will be an individual decision of each breeder. This is not a whole lot different from how we do things now anyway. I have not decided on whether or not I would use one of these LUA in my breeding program in the future. I would like to see more results of some controlled studies before making that decision.

Please be patient with each other and not be hasty in making a final decision on something that has some potential to help our breed with a huge health issue. Try to keep an open mind and look for solutions to the current impass that we seem to be teetering on. Let's try to resolve problems, not create them. Flaring tempers and raw emotions just help in the marketing of Prozac. We're being very self destructive in such behavior. We can accomplish so much more as a group than as splintered smaller factions.

Sincerely,

Linda L. Scheller-Bradley, D.V.M.
Laurel Dalmatians