

Gordon Setter Health Report 2023

Another year seems to have sped by again and here I am looking to reflect on another year of monitoring Gordon health. Statistics from the AGM appear in the minutes published in this newsletter so I will just briefly comment on a couple of things.

A really good number of Gordons were clinically eye tested during 2022-90- but there is still not full compliance with the COE for the sire and dam to be tested prior to breeding. 4 stud dogs and 13 bitches have no evidence of ever having had a clinical eye test so just something to bear in mind when planning a litter. Eye testing clinics seem to be increasing after the lack of them during pandemic times and the Gordon breed clubs put them on to help breeders keep up with testing.

Genetically, the breed continues to produce more rcd-4 clears than carriers which is pleasing and the DNA litter testing scheme sponsored by UGSR has helped monitor this.

Compliance for hip scoring is very good and the breed continues to have positive data. Just a reminder that Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) are updated as more data is gathered so it is worth checking the scores of sire and dams prior to breeding as they can change over time.

Information on heart conditions is still being reported to Nottingham University- owners who also speak to me about it have mainly concerned older dogs but there has been one young dog this year. I always ask that owners contact the Uni and complete the survey but a breed health report form can also be submitted. I have just had an update from Mark Dunning who is heading this research and he's asked if everyone who has completed the survey so far can they please contact me -they may need to change the survey platform so some further information may be required. Once this is done, he is hopeful we will receive some data. Please contact me via my email; kathrynnewrigley@hotmail.co.uk.

11 Health reports were received in 2022 and 6 of these were puppies which is different to previous years where usually it is adult dogs reported. Conditions reported for puppies were; juvenile pyoderma, congenital peritoneo-pericardal diaphragmatic hernia, suspected immune response, steroid responsive meningitis – arteritis (SRMA), cherry eye and congenital portosystemic shunt (liver shunt). I thank the breeders for reporting these conditions and I know it is particularly stressful for a breeder when a condition occurs in young puppies. I would stress that these conditions are not common, some are very rare so it can be difficult to understand why it has occurred -an answer we may never get.

Reporting conditions is a good first step-it raises awareness and hopefully makes the breeder feel they are not alone. I am the Health co Ordinator but I am a breeder too and fully understand the difficulties of making sound, informed decisions when

planning a breeding. Talking amongst breeders this year I know people have concerns about things popping up they weren't expecting.

Health requirements are hips and eyes but there is a lot more to a dog than that! What about the potential sire/dams general health? Family health? Is there a condition either sides wish to avoid doubling up on? What have the sire and dam already produced?

Don't assume you know a dog, ask the questions you want even if he has been used a number of times, you are basing your decisions on what you know not what other breeders have done. Likewise stud dog owners, ask the same questions of the bitch.

I'd like to share some wise words I have quoted before by breeder and geneticist Dr Malcolm Willis as I think he hits the nail on the head;

'The more we are prepared to share our knowledge and to publicise our failures, the more our breeds will benefit. If we want to understand how a particular problem occurs and how to be rid of it, we have to co operate, or we will achieve nothing. We are the custodians of our chosen breeds during the relatively short period of our dog breeding lives. It behoves us to hand over the material we breed with in a better state than when we received it or we have achieved nothing and the breeds we profess to love will be the sufferers.

'For the good of the breed' is the most often quoted lie in dogdom!'

'I see a number of breeders who become almost paranoid about defects and not a few geneticists/veterinarians who encourage this paranoia with doom laden predictions about what will happen if a dog with this defect or that defect is not culled from breeding programmes along with all its relatives.

Thus I see recommendations not to breed from hips scores above 8 which in many breeds would mean that barely 7 % of the breed would be left after culling all the scores above 8! In this 7% could be many dogs of unacceptable character or conformation or with other defects which would also have to be culled. The consequence of such a policy if followed, would be the death knell for many breeders and is quite wrong.

Every breeder will produce defects if he/she breeds long enough. Those who tell that they do not, have either stopped breeding, breed hardly at all or are being economical with the truth. Defects are going to occur in any species and many of them will appear quite out of the blue with no warning or previous clues as to the fact that this defect was 'in the line.'

There is no crime in producing a defect. Crime, if any, lies in what you do about it. If you bury yours quickly and keep quiet about it and I do the same with mine, then

sooner or later we may use each other's dogs and pay the penalty for not having been honest with one another and with the breed we probably profess to love'

Malcom B Willis -1992

I think the weight of responsibility can weigh heavy on breeders but this has to be shared by hopefully talking to and supporting each other.

I haven't received any health report forms so far this year. Anything is reportable! Forms can be downloaded from the breed club websites or there is an online submission on the breed club websites and the breed council website. As I keep saying, breed health cannot be monitored or improved without data.

In summary, I have no major concerns regarding the health of Gordons and I continue to advocate the sharing of information and being supportive of fellow breeders and owners.

I am always happy to be contacted with any concerns or queries and will do my best to help. Likewise if anyone would like a particular condition to be explained in an article in future newsletters then please tell me. Or you can share your own -I was recently looking through some old breed newsletters and there were quite a few articles from breeders sharing their experience of a particular health condition. Over the years a number of topics have been covered and it can be useful to look back on this information.

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