



## Show Dogs Article

### Pedigree Dogs Exposed by Chris Bridgewater

The BBC's recent programme got everyone talking about the terrible health problems that are riddling the show rings... did anyone wonder about the Gundog breeds and whether they have any problems? There are more than you think!

Most people have heard about hip scores – they may not know that 0:0 is perfect and 53:53 is no hips at all, but do they know a breed's "mean average"? Do they know how many times an unscrupulous person can take the same dog with perfect hips to be x-rayed with different KC documents each time? Hundreds. How about eye tests. The same "clear" dog could be taken again and again with different documents. Thankfully we are being asked for dog ID these days, but it's not compulsory.

A lot of people are afraid to have their dogs tested in case something crops up that they don't want to see. Heaven help us if it reflected badly on the FTCh sire or dam... you can't blame owners for being worried. Potentially, there's big money at stake.

In order for the Kennel Club to tighten up on healthy breeding practices it must ensure that all breeding dogs are permanently identified (usually microchipped) before being presented for health tests. This ID follows the dog, along with its health certificates, throughout its life. Chips may be scanned at every veterinary examination and could be spot checked if ever there was ever a query. But, how can the KC make anything mandatory? Registration is, after all, voluntary. Who can stop the breeding of unregistered but recognisable breeds that are bought without any health checks done whatsoever. Answer? No-one. So long as there is a cheaper option the public will, in ignorance, take it.

One good thing that the programme has done is heighten the awareness of the plight of some dogs. Let's hope the public DO now ask more questions and DO more research into their

chosen breed. Many (local Authority) licensed businesses sell umpteen breeds throughout the year. Rarely seen with any dam, pups are sold as "pedigree" and passed off with some idiot piece of fiction supposedly showing their heritage. The word pedigree does NOT mean KC registered.

When a breed is numerically vast – like Labradors and English Springers – we don't hear many horror stories, but they DO exist. How many owners of working dogs bought them after having researched the health of the prospective litter? How many owners know the different conditions that occur in a particular breed? And of the breeder; how many popular studs (as in top FT winners) have their hips scored and their eye certificate kept current? There should be a fair few Labs/Retrievers ticking the boxes for that one. Pitifully few spaniels have their hips scored or eyes tested. How many popular stud Labs have their DNA tested for PRA, which only manifests itself later in a dog's life? Not so many boxes ticked there... I don't think I'll even bother asking the spaniels that one. How many *popularly used* ESS stud dogs are tested for Fucocidosis? NONE at my last viewing of the list. There is one Open Stake winner on there, amongst a very few other FT bred dogs but that's it.

See <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/item/1144> .

There is only one Fucocidosis carrier shown. Not much of a threat, you might think. However, this carrier's pedigree contains several top FTCh lines. Where did the gene come from? Who knows? It came from somewhere. Fucocidosis is so rare that dogs that die of the disease have not have hit the headlines.

You don't hear of poor eyesighted dogs. They're excellent beating dogs 'cos they have to use their nose to get about and can't see the birds falling in the distance. You don't hear about bad hips as the dogs never make the grade in the first place, without any diagnosis as to why they just won't go.

There are areas at the KC that need a good kick up the backside but, on the whole, they are making huge leaps forward. The Accredited Breeders Scheme is to be applauded in the theory behind it's introduction and will improve, I am certain, once

some hiccoughs are ironed out. At the moment, the KC is the best bet that we have.

Maybe equal space on each registration document could promote the Accredited Breeder scheme rather than huge amount devoted to the KC's own Petplan Insurance. Thus informing owners that AB pups are from health checked parents so they have far more peace of mind. A bit of computer programming could link the puppy's breed's available Health Tests and be printed in this new section.

Don't wag fingers only at show dogs. We have to put our own working dog lines in order, too. Over use of a "popular winning sire" can apply to FTCh as well as a ShCh and, if everyone goes to the same dog and, sometime in the future, he proves to be carrying something nasty hidden away in his genes, it doesn't do much for his breed. Health checks, including DNA, cost less than one stud fee.

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