

Det engelske jagtblad "SHOOTING TIMES" har hver uge et par sider med læserbreve. Jeg har valgt at gengive nogle af dem der vedrører MYOPATI som lader til at være noget nyt for engelske opdrættere. Specielt efter en artikel af David Tomlinson som også var en af de første der gjorde opmærksom på OTIGENTEST.

Labrador myopathy

After our two black Labradors died at the grand old age of 15, we decided last August to get another Labrador bitch. While out walking her in January this year, she collapsed and was unable to get up. Our vet took X-rays, which appeared normal. We rested her for three weeks but she couldn't exercise at all so she was referred to the Animal Health Trust in Newmarket for tests. We had to wait four weeks for the results, which showed that she had Labrador myopathy.

There is no treatment for myopathy. She continued to deteriorate rapidly and every day was a real struggle for her. We had her put down two weeks ago at the age of 10 months.

I have contacted the Kennel Club and Labrador Club asking for it to suggest to breeders that they get their bitches and dogs tested for myopathy as they do for hips and eyes. The blood test costs less than £100 and would stop this awful condition being passed on to the dogs' offspring.

Our dog's breeder had no idea the sire and dam were carriers of the gene. I urge all Labrador breeders to test their dogs.

S. Doggett
Suffolk

ST 15/5

Test for myopathy

I agree wholeheartedly with the comments made by S. Doggett (*Labrador myopathy*, 15 May). After breeding from my very good and well-bred working bitch with different sires, I recently discovered that her second litter, born a year ago, contracted canine myopathy.

It only came to light when one of the puppies deteriorated so badly that, like the dog mentioned by S. Doggett, it was taken to the Animal Health Trust in Newmarket for tests. It was diagnosed with myopathy and put down last week.

I rang the owners of the rest of the litter and discovered that another dog had the illness. In this case several vets had failed to diagnose it. Thankfully it was a much milder form and the dog will be able to live a pretty normal life.

If I had had *any* idea that this condition existed I would have had it tested for and would never have bred. I believe many more experienced breeders are ignorant of this threat.

Dealing with this condition should be made a priority in the Labrador world. Testing should be compulsory as is the case for hips and eyes.

Jo Sharpe

Northamptonshire

ST 22/5

CNM testing for Labradors

Prompted by David Tomlinson's recent article on Centro Nuclear Myopathy (*CNM — a tragic disease*, 22 May), I decided to have my dog tested for CNM. I followed the advice on the website (www.labradorcnm.com) recommended by David and I'm so pleased I took the time, which was hardly any, to take advantage of the service.

I received the CNM testing kit from French vet Dr Laurent Tiret and had my bitch, Lexi, swabbed. I sent the swabs off immediately as my bitch had just whelped and I wanted the results before the puppies left.

Within a few days I received an email to let me know the swabs had been received and that the results would be with me in two weeks. To my surprise, the following day I received the results by email. What terrific service! My bitch is clear of the CNM mutation and not at risk for transmitting the deleterious gene.

Cindy Keeley
Derby

ST 29/5

Myopathy in Labs

There are several points to be emphasised about central nuclear myopathy (CNM), which David Tomlinson recently wrote about (*CNM — a tragic disease*, 22 May). This name is a relatively new one. However, under its previous names, hereditary Labrador retriever myopathy or muscular myopathy, it has been known since the 1970s.

The generation of a test for CNM is a fantastic step forward. It allows detection of the gene in dogs before symptoms are seen, and allows breeders to breed with confidence.

It is important to test all breeding black and yellow Labs. Dogs that are affected — those that have two copies of the CNM gene — should not be bred from. Carriers do not show signs of the disease, as they only have one copy of the gene; if bred to a dog that is genetically clear, no puppies would show signs of CNM and on average half of the litter would be absolutely clear and half would be carriers.

This approach to breeding is preferable to excluding merely all carriers of the CNM gene. Too rigorous exclusion of carriers leads to a significant shrinkage of the available gene pool and is not necessary.

It is vital that breeders spread the word. As is often the case, they will find that their knowledge is more up to date than many vets'.

Finally, owners should be aware that only a few months ago a group of researchers in Canada discovered a new type of myopathy in a Labrador, one unrelated to CNM. No test is available for this condition and it is not known how widespread this new disease is.

Harvey Carruthers, ST Vet

By email **ST 5/6**

CNM-carrier concern

I read David Tomlinson's recent article on CNM (*CNM — a tragic disease*, 22 May) with interest, but also with some concern. DNA testing means that we are able to avoid producing affected progeny. It should be used as a tool so we can breed safely even when one parent is a carrier.

To use testing to eliminate carriers from our breeding stock would seriously deplete the gene pool. Carriers are clinically normal

and, as long as they are mated with tested clear stock, they will only ever produce clinically normal progeny.

Not long ago, I learned that the sire of my litter was a confirmed carrier. Fortunately my bitch tested clear. I adopted my usual policy and kept the puppy that pleased me most. If, in the future, she becomes the worker I hope she will, and if all her other screening results are okay, I will find out whether she is a carrier before breeding from her. If she is clear then I will continue to breed for temperament, working ability and looks, and if the dog that fits the bill happens to be a carrier then so be it. If she does turn out to be a carrier, I shall find a suitable clear dog and breed on, safe in the knowledge that none of her progeny will be affected.

Either way, I will place endorsements on the registrations of all progeny to ensure that these safeguards are applied before they are bred from.

Kate Smith

By email **ST 12/6**

CNM awareness

Congratulations to David Tomlinson for his excellent article on Labrador CNM (*CNM — a tragic disease*, 22 May).

I was first made aware of CNM by a German client two months ago, when she suggested I might like to consider submitting

my dogs for testing. Fortunately they all proved to be clear of CNM. Since then I have received several emails from Labrador owners with news of their experiences of this terrible disease. It seems the Labrador breed clubs appear not to be at all proactive in getting to grips with this problem and we certainly cannot look to the Kennel Club for a lead on this.

Your correspondent Jo Sharpe (*Test for myopathy*, 22 May) said: *testing should be compulsory as is the case for hips and eyes*. In fact, the Kennel Club does not insist on any health checks being carried out as a condition of puppy registration — it merely recommends. I am told that of the 45,000-plus Labrador puppies registered each year less than half of all litters come from breeders who have had any health checks carried out prior to breeding.

G. Roberts

Riversway Gundogs

West Sussex



CNM — a tragic disease

Centro Nuclear Myopathy is a distressing and debilitating disease. David Tomlinson looks at the importance of testing your Labrador

Until recently I was a YouTube virgin: though I was well aware of the Internet's self-broadcasting channel, I had never found any reason to watch it. Then John Pawlyn sent me an email about a disease of Labradors called Centro Nuclear Myopathy (CNM), including a YouTube link so that I could watch a video clip of the effect of the disease on a five-month-old Labrador puppy. It made depressing and distressing viewing. After a further letter in ST (*Labrador myopathy*, 15 May), and despite thinking I'd written quite enough on Labrador diseases already this year, here we go again.

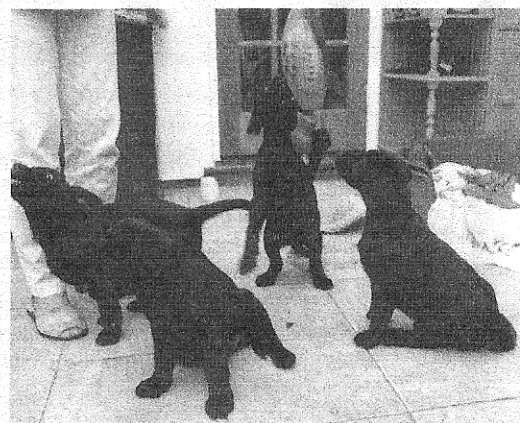
I'm aware that there are many people who would rather turn a blind eye to the many diseases that affect our most popular breed of gundog, believing that too much concentration on health and genetics tends to make us forget working ability. Indeed, one correspondent, an A-panel retriever judge, wrote recently, saying: *The problem with all these tests is that as soon as one condition is found another will be discovered and we will be*

▼ Working ability is important in breeding lines, but is irrelevant if the gundog is not healthy

in danger of breeding bits of paper and losing those things we hold most dear, such as temperament, game-finding ability, nose, brains and trainability, to name but a few.

True — but however good a dog's game-finding ability or its temperament, it's not much use if the animal isn't 100 per cent fit and healthy. It is like a Ferrari with fabulous looks, terrific road-holding and handling, but an engine that's likely to blow up at any minute. Thus I make no apologies for considering yet another disease. I quote from John's email: *The little-known (in the UK) Labrador disease CNM is more common than supposed or admitted. I bred from my bitch two years ago. She is from good working bloodlines with many FTChs. I used a reputable stud dog. She had six puppies, all of which were checked by the vet at eight weeks; no problems were found. I sold one dog puppy that was slightly smaller and quieter than the rest to a pet home. At five months he started to show signs of weakness in the back legs and could not take much exercise without collapsing. He was diagnosed as suffering from Labrador CNM.*

As a result I had the bitch tested by the Animal Health Trust (AHT), which confirmed that she is a carrier, so I have had her spayed.



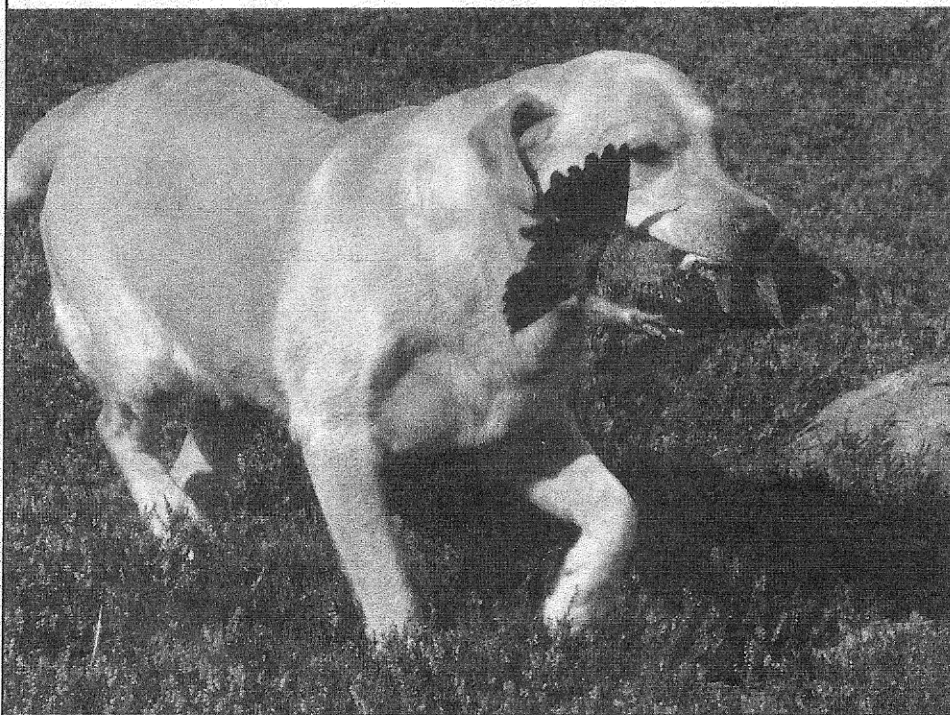
▲ CNM becomes evident in puppies of about five months old — they become weak and don't eat

I informed the owners of the other puppies from the litter that if they wanted to breed they must test, which the owner of one of the bitch puppies has done — the puppy is also a carrier. Unfortunately there is no register of clear animals tested by the AHT. However, the Alfort School of Veterinary Medicine in France has been DNA testing for several years and there are international registers of clear dogs and bitches. To see the Alfort website, look at www.labradorcnm.com which is in English.

I searched to try to find clear animals resident in the UK without success. Some tests have been done recently and there is at least one breeder with a clear dog and bitches. If only I had known before I purchased a puppy earlier this month. I chose from quite different bloodlines, but as with most Labradors there is at least one heavily used stud dog in both pedigrees, though going back up to four generations.

I tried without success to persuade the breeders to test the bitch. As soon as I collected my puppy I had mouth swabs taken and sent these to France where the answer came back four days later: I had another carrier. Needless to say I am devastated. I fail to understand why breeders who have spent money on Optigen testing, hip and shoulder testing can any longer ignore this disease. I think it needs further publicity to preserve the health status of our great breed.

John tells me that he acquired his first





Labrador 52 years ago, when he was 18, and has had one virtually ever since. His current two are numbers 15 and 16. He shoots over his dogs and picks-up with them but doesn't trial.

I have also received an email from a Swedish reader, Charlotte Lindell, on the subject. Charlotte has been breeding Labradors since 1971, and her Minnows Labradors are well known both in Sweden and further afield. A few years ago, Charlotte imported a stud dog from England, Cypher. He came tested for all the usual problems, was thought to be 100 per cent sound and proved to be a great dog, both in the shooting field and at home.

Charlotte first suspected something was wrong when one of her puppy buyers reported that her dog, sired by Cypher, was a poor eater. At the same time another breeder told of similar problems with three puppies, also sired by Cypher. These puppies were failing to develop

▼ The tests for CNM are simple and not that expensive, and breeders should consider them

any muscles. Numerous visits to the vet followed, but it took many months before the cause of the illness was diagnosed as CNM. According to Charlotte, *the disease is awful — by the age of four or five months the development of muscle stops and the puppy soon cannot either eat or move and has to be put down.*

Charlotte discovered that the disease is hereditary, and that the genetics are the same as PRA. If you breed a carrier with another carrier there's a strong possibility of producing affected puppies. She also discovered that much of the research on the disease has been undertaken in France by Alfort, and that the test is both simple and reliable, as well as being relatively inexpensive (£41 or so).

As a responsible breeder, Charlotte decided to test all her stud dogs, finding that four of her imported field trial dogs from the UK were carriers. She writes: *Some of them have very famous sires, though the affected gene might of course come from the mother — if a test is not done you wouldn't know. Some people might say: "Here come the Swedes with all their tests and so on. What about working ability and*

temperament?" But for me health is a separate issue from the rest. Watch the YouTube video and I suspect that you will agree.

Charlotte also sent me an email from a Dutch friend on the same subject. *Last Friday evening we had our five-month-old Labrador put down. The diagnosis was CNM. We bought her in England and had checked hips, eyes and elbows: everything was fine. The sire had competed twice in the IGL Retriever Championship and is a FTCh, while the dam is a FTW. The puppy was always a poor eater and at four months had trouble walking. We had many visits to the vet before finally going to the faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Utrecht, where the diagnosis was probably CNM. The faculty didn't know about the DNA test. We have a lot of sadness about the loss of our dog. It's difficult to find out anything about CNM in Holland, while little appears to be known about it in England. My dog's breeder thinks that the English push it under the carpet.* ■

To see the YouTube video, go to www.youtube.com and search for "cnm Labrador". I also recommend viewing Charlotte's own website www.minnows.se. Though much of it is in Swedish, there is an English translation, click on Hälsa and then myopati.