

POAG IN PBGVs

On 13 April 2005 a PBGV bred in the UK was seen by Professor Peter Bedford at the Royal Veterinary College to confirm that the dog was suffering with POAG. He was 6 years old. He had sired a litter and his litter sister had produced a number of litters. His dam, Sashkan Croissant, had been tested 12 April 1999 on the pneumotonometer and found to have a low score, she was retested but unfortunately after that everything seemed to tail off. Sadly, despite Prof Bedford's concern, her progeny were not tested when they reached 2 years of age.

Here is the sequence of events leading up to this problem.

In October 1996 I noticed that Hardi des Rives de la Garonne was blind and contacted Professor Peter Bedford. Hardi was seen in November 1996 and Prof Bedford confirmed a case of POAG and explained the implications of this to me. He suggested that we do some further tests prior to informing all puppy owners from Hardi, who was 4 years old. I contacted Nick Frost in USA and Jolanda Huisman in Holland immediately as both had progeny of Hardi. I also contacted Linda Lewis who was about to bring a bitch to my dog Debucher C'est Ça, a nephew of Hardi.

With the incredible help of Prof Bedford we arranged Saturday morning testing sessions for all related stock. In all about 30 hounds were regularly eye tested for signs of Glaucoma. Having informed the BGV Club committee, they arranged a meeting with Prof Bedford the following year Good Friday, 1997. At that time I had decided to euthanise Hardi at the Royal Veterinary College and donate his eyes to the college. Prof Bedford telephoned me to tell me of the arranged meeting and was surprised I had not been invited or notified. The Chairman then told me not to attend although I pointed out Hardi was my dog. Prof Bedford invited me to attend and at this meeting I outlined the symptoms I had noticed in Hardi and Prof Bedford gave a very intricate explanation of the disease endorsing again that, until we established the mode of inheritance and ascertained that Hardi was not a "one off", we should continue with our research programme without causing undue panic amongst members.

At the AGM 1997 I informed members of the situation. The committee then decided to issue a "health update" to all members a copy of which was sent to me and I telephoned the Chairman to implore him not to send it out in the format suggested as it merely said "Hardi and Hamanda lines should not be used." I was already becoming aware of Lens Luxation problems in Holland and the USA going back to Galant des Ajoncs de l'Aulne who was already one of the dogs on the research programme as his sire and Hardi's sire were full brothers. This dog and not Hardi or Hamanda subsequently produced the problem.

Prof Bedford then told us that a testing programme was taking place with Beagles in the USA with the use of a pneumotonometer and moves began to attempt to purchase this machine. We raised £6,500 with the help of the Canine Supporters Charity (£5,000), the BGV Club £1,000 and the "Hardi Fund" £500, raised when I raffled a brass PBGV door knocker.

On 30 January 1998 I heard of several dogs going blind in Europe and made a report to the BGV Club AGM, 4 April 1998. In June 1998 Prof Bedford and the BGV Club Committee were made aware of a litter of blind dogs in Holland and others including a dog in USA belonging to Jeff Pepper who were all sufferers of suspected POAG. These dogs were sired by Galant (Pierrot) or other Baldo progeny. Once more we urged the BGV Club Committee to contact all breeders who had used Pierrot or had Pierrot progeny but sadly the response was unsatisfactory. Prof Bedford was sure that if we could get the tonometer up and running and test dogs at the age of 2 or more that we could, with prolonged therapy, at best prevent blindness and at worst prolong the time by years of giving the dog eyesight.

Finally, on 23 December 1998, the first dogs were tested at the Royal Veterinary College on the tonometer - all directly related to Hardi and Pierrot. Tests were carried out 22 January 1999 and in June 1999. A dog imported by Betty Judge (Plushcourt), Milord de Fin Renard, whose grandfather was litter brother to Hardi's sire, was tested at my request. His sire Igor d' Parla was known to have produced blind dogs in Europe. Milord had been used by Mrs Judge, Mrs Mackenzie and Ms Diana Nichols.

By this time Jolanda Huisman and I had reported to the French Griffon Vendéen Club at the Delegates' Meetings every year regarding this problem, which was obviously emanating from French stock. We had a translation of my report on the tonometer sent to the President. At last after 4 years they accepted there were problems and had an eye testing programme at the following Nationale d'Elevage. Results were printed in the magazine after the show. They were rather inconclusive. Sadly, not all breeders came forward. Afterwards the Club du Griffon Vendéen had some meetings regarding this and tried to make breeders test their stock. As we discovered in the UK, this was not easy.

In August 1999 I informed the BGV Club that a dog unrelated to either Hardi or Pierrot, namely Dehra Larroche, who had been sent to New Zealand and was now 5 years of age, was blind with POAG. Once more we urged members to have related stock tested. Only Linda Lewis came up from Wales with Tangaer l'Amour who shared the same sire Dehra Xato. Xato was also the grandsire of Pommeriaie Alexandre.

On 23 October 1999 more dogs were tested and on 31 December 1999 Croissant was re-tested along with Dehra Paris, a granddaughter of Pierrot, who had also tested with a low score. I had informed Mr and Mrs R Savage who had bred Croissant, that her litter brothers and sister should be tested. Sadly, I received no response. I asked John Clifton (Famecliff) on several occasions to bring his related stock for testing and he refused.

A Mrs Green who had a litter which doubled up on Pierrot was asked to bring the litter for testing and she refused. Subsequently another dog imported by Betty Judge, Noiraud des Amis de la Lande, born in 1997 went blind at the age of 4 but was euthanised prior to being seen by Prof Bedford. He had produced 4 litters. Mrs Judge informed the club of Noiraud's death but it seemed did not test her own stock afterwards. We had been aware that this dog's sire had gone blind in USA. Sadly, there was a grandson of Noiraud treated by Prof Bedford. He was 3 years old. Another bitch, Famecliff Dramatic, who was bred from then went blind and Famecliff Debutant was also affected. A Chantalle's bitch in Australia was also reported to have POAG. She was Chantalle's Kirsch avec Ebbtide (Chantalle's Hellissio to Cavanero Angelina). Hellissio was a Famecliff Pascal daughter. Pascal had produced blind progeny. The dam, Cavanero Angelina, was a daughter of Wakelyns Rumeur at Cavanero ex Ivelyside Dora at Sweetdean. I informed Mrs Ann Mackenzie of this case.

In the case of Famecliff Debutant, her dam was Chantalle's Angelique. Litter brother to this bitch was Chantalle's Asticot. When this was reported by me to vet Trevor Turner, we should have tried to test Asticot progeny, ie Pommeriaie Alexandre, this might have helped him at the time. It appeared that in some cases a doubling up of lines to Salto and Varon Zorro had ultimately produced POAG.