

Give A Dog A Genome Project – Shetland Sheepdog Breed Day

Many Sheltie breeders and owners will know that all the UK Shetland Sheepdog Clubs are supporting the Give A Dog A Genome project being run by the Animal Health Trust. The AHT are sequencing the genome of our breed and analysing the results to try and identify the cause of the type of GPRA (Generalised Progressive Retinal Atrophy) which has been found in UK Shelties, and to develop a DNA test for it. This UK variant is a late onset form of GPRA which starts with sight impairment, particularly in low light levels, and eventually leads to complete blindness. (N.B. This is not the same form of GPRA known as PRA-CNGA1 which has been seen in Shelties in Scandinavia, for which there is already a DNA test.)

To facilitate the research project the AHT has offered to run a Shetland Sheepdog Breed Day at Kentford, near Newmarket, on Friday, 25th January 2019 commencing around 9:30 am. They will have ophthalmologists available to do clinical eye examinations, which will be FREE for any dog aged 8 years or over, and obviously they would be interested in taking DNA samples from those Shelties for use in their research. They will also do eye tests with certificates for dogs of any age up to 8 years for the normal BVA test price. Please note: the English Shetland Sheepdog Club is still subsidising tests up to 50% of the cost for Shelties over the age of 3 years, so this would be a good opportunity for people to get eye tests done at very competitive prices.

As well as eye testing, the AHT will also give a presentation on the Give A Dog A Genome project and the GPRA research in particular, and possibly other health related topics as well if there is enough interest. One other important consideration – lunch will be provided!

If anybody would be interested in attending a Breed Day at the AHT on 25th January would you please let me know as soon as possible. The AHT need an idea of numbers to work out whether it will be viable to run the session, and to make sure there are enough members of the Genetics and Ophthalmology teams available to support it.

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