

Been a busy year; with a new limited edition cartoon (Bath Time) launched in late Spring. The first two having completely sold out; this 3rd in the sequence has already passed the half-way mark. If you haven't bought one yet, they're normally available at all UK Schnauzer clubs' events, or direct from Sue McGrann, priced £12.50 (if asking to be posted, add another £2.50). The raffle of the 2 original 'Lori Bush' illustrations really caught the imagination of all Mini supporters across all 3 sizes, with tickets being distributed through NSC & MSC mags (thanks to them). The total income has passed £900 and there's a couple of weeks to go before it is drawn (by the time you read this, some lucky person will be the proud owner of these delightful illustrations, as the winner will have been announced at the Mini Club Show in mid October). The JMSEF is extremely grateful to Peter Newman (Risepark) for so generously donating these drawings to raise funds for eye research. Thanks Peter - your thoughtful contribution will add over £800 to the research fund – and everyone else who supported this raffle.

Work in following up the collection of samples continues, with much of this activity 'behind the scenes' and by all sorts of people. Sometimes the opportunity arises to locate affected dogs and obtain crucial DNA samples for the AHT. Unless the owner permits it, the information unfortunately cannot be available publicly. Early this year we heard of a cluster of about 5 Minis with cataracts that had, or were being rehomed via a rescue centre in the Home Counties. Following a discussion with the rescue centre and the eye panellist concerned (who felt the cases were all hereditary) the JMSEF agreed to fund the cost of eye testing under the KC/BVA scheme, so that – if positive - the DNA would be of value to the research. This is still underway (these things always seem to take huge amounts of time!) and a further case has also been seen (this time paid by the rescue centre). We subsequently heard that there may be an additional 6 or 7 cases with cataracts, so the JMSEF reps asked the supporting clubs if they would be prepared to contribute to the costs involved. Laurie Woods (Grimmett of old!) has to be praised for her tenacity in tracing these cases and for being the conduit with DBARC (the rescue centre).

It's possibly understandable that some supporters now, after 8 years, feel we are no closer to a solution, so it is easy for them to say 'what's the point?'

Some facts for you, to prove that these efforts - in ensuring we have sufficient funds to cover the costs of research when enough DNA samples are collected - deserve your continued support.

There have been at least 14 cases of CHC litters in the last 30 months (5 in '09; 5 in '10 and at least 4 in '11) with between 25 – 30 puppies affected; some so badly that they were put down.

It is such a cruel condition; almost without exception, the breeder will have no idea that there is a problem until the litter screening. It must be heart-breaking for anyone to find that even just one puppy is affected; even worse, if one or more is affected so badly that the advice from the eye panelist means the breeder is faced with having to make the ultimate decision on a puppy (or puppies) at just 6 or 8 weeks old. We all hope it's something we never have to deal with.

So our support of the JMSEF is the thing we can positively do to arrive at solution – these are problems that the breed has endured for the last 30 years or more; the JMSEF is the single, most positive, effort that breed enthusiasts have made during that time.

For supporters of the JMSEF, those who question it somehow seem to be missing the point entirely.

In 2009 only 48% of Mini litters were eye screened (515 out of 1079 litters registered); in 2010, it was about 56% (646 out of 1,163 litters).

In adults (looking for HC or PRA) with this number of litters, you would expect at least 1500 Minis to have been eye tested (each litter needs a sire & dam!) But allow for multiple dams using the same sire and (unfortunately) some breeders breeding in successive seasons, so you can't simply double the number of litters to arrive at the number of adults which should have been eye tested.

The actual figures were: 2009 - 893; 2010 – 916; both figures somewhat lower than you would have expected.

If we claim any affection for the breed, then surely we have an absolute duty to continue to do everything possible to find a solution to these eye conditions and – unfortunately – that solution (or solutions) will cost money. We were originally told that the cost of initial research into any one condition would be around £20,000 (at 2002 figures); we had 3 conditions, so the target was £60,000 – with inflation that's over £73,000 today.

The fund now stands at £59,000; we may need more if we seriously want to address the inherited eye conditions our breed faces.

And if it's not all needed for eyes, then there are other concerning health conditions which probably need addressing at some point in the future.

Tony McDermott