

Dear ILU members!

Here are the minutes from the Russian Leonberger Club presidium meeting dedicated to the upcoming ILU meeting in September 2012. We would like to draw your kind attention to some points brought up by our Club members in relation to PN / LPN issue. We would appreciate, if you could read the points below and share them with your respective Club members to see, if similar issues are relevant for your Clubs, as they are for us. Hope for your understanding and support.

Now to the points.

1. We would like to get an answer to our question raised at the Union meeting in 2011, whether it has been proved that LPN-1 gene is leonberger breed specific. In case the answer is unclear and research is still going on, we suggest to refrain from using letter "L" in all PN related communication until further clarification.

The LPN1 mutation was found predominantly in Leonberger dogs and in a homozygous state in a total of four Saint Bernards which were affected with similar clinical signs at a young age. Crossbreeding could be a possible explanation.

2. In 1998 Michigan University has completed PN research for Alaskan malamute breed. Even up till now, almost 15 years later, there are no compulsory breeding regulations for the dogs testing. The subject is still under research. We have strong belief, that in case of Leonberger breed the decisions were done very fast, without full evaluation of the scope of the problem and development of the detailed and applicable to all countries testing procedures.

The first cases of early-onset progressive polyneuropathy appeared in the Alaskan Malamute population in Norway in the late 1970s. A group at University of Copenhagen, Frederiksberg, Denmark, has recently found the causative mutation, the scientific manuscript describing the mutation is still under review. At the recent dog and cat genome conference held at Visby, Sweden, May 2012 the results were presented for the first time. The University of Bern's group was involved in the successful study unraveling the genetic cause of this PN form.

3. Our Leonberger Club would like also to get clarification, whether it was ILU (or its presidium?) which initiated, and prepared PN research brief and forwarded it to Bern Institute and what was the brief per se. If yes, it means that ILU is the owner of the testing and diagnostics methodology, correct? Has it been published somewhere? There should be a document as a result of the scope of work fulfilled by the Institute according to the brief. Can this document be presented to the Union in full version?

The University of Bern's group initiated the PN research project in Switzerland several years ago and initiated collaboration with scientist in the US (Diane Shelton and Jim Mickelson's group). This was always in close collaboration with the breeding organizations.

The answers to the questions above are highly important for the Russian Leonberger Club members because of the following reasons:

1. According to the customs and legal regulations biological materials (blood samples, sperm, etc.) mailing or crossing the border in other way is forbidden in Russia. Therefore, the Club has no legal grounds to force the Leonberger owners passing LPN-1 test and include this point into the breeding regulations.

We need to have the opportunity to make this test in Russia. The methodology should be public, so clinics or certified laboratories in any country will be able to make the test (like HD test methodology approved by FCI).

As far as we haven't published the scientific description (this will be done quite soon) the test is limited to the known Swiss or US lab's.

2. PN test methodology should be approved by RKF (Russian Kennel Federation) and included into the Breeding regulations. Only in this case Russian Leonberger Club could ask its members to make this test. Otherwise, breeding regulations of the Russian Leonberger Club will be in contradiction with the RKF Breeding regulations, which might cause numerous conflicts with the Leonberger owners and between the organizations. Is PN test methodology approved and accepted by any senior Kennel organization (Club) of the Union members countries?
3. Please, inform the members of your respective Clubs, that LPN-1 test is not compulsory for the Leonbergers living in Russia in case they are used in breeding in Russia or abroad, as well as for the puppies (their parents) imported to other countries. It is very important, because otherwise it puts our Leonberger population in discriminative position and excludes them from the international breeding pool!
4. Also we would like to forward to the Union meeting the following questions from our Club members:
 - How often PN (LPN) is diagnosed by the practicing veterinarians? What is the mortality rate caused by this disease? We would like to get statistics and conduct expert research with the professional veterinarians.

Unfortunately, there are no published statistics available.

- Is there any medication to cure the disease or recommendations to the dog owners to follow in order to improve quality of life of the sick dogs or carriers?

Unfortunately, there are no real therapy known, palliative methods are indicated.

- Do we have enough research data to know the inheritance mechanism of this disease? Does it have polygenic character? In how many generations could we track the carriers or parents N/N testing proves all the descendants to be clear?

Our current data suggests that LPN1 is inherited in a dominant, dose-dependent fashion (more copies of the LPN1 mutation = more severe disease). We consider D/N dogs to be at risk for developing LPN1, though typically clinical signs are milder, and the age of onset is later than is seen in D/D (affected) dogs.

- Existing data base accuracy causes high concerns due to the fact that no dog identity proof by the veterinarian has been required up until July-August 2012. This point has been added to the form of Bern Institute very recently.

Thank you again for your attention and consideration of the questions above. We are looking forward to getting more information in order to move forward and making our action plan based on the answers. Russian Leonberger Club members are fully committed to cooperation with the ILU in improving the quality of life of the leonbergers and caring about their health!

Best regards,

Leonberger Club of Russian Federation