



ABCF MESSENGER

Official Newsletter of the American Boxer Charitable Foundation, Inc.
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From the Editor: This special ABC Issue of the ABCF Messenger features a discussion on the various choices available to breeders who want to incorporate the Degenerative Myelopathy DNA test into their health testing programs. We hope you find this information useful.

We're also celebrating the impact that Wendy Wallner, DVM, had on the Boxer during her tragically brief life, and the impact that our "Dr Boxer" will continue to have on us and on our dogs through her final bequest to the American Boxer Charitable Foundation. Wendy's memory will live on in the hearts of all Boxer lovers as long as the ABCF and its Memorial Endowment Fund exist.

The DM DNA Test: Hard Choices & Tough Decisions

Ever since a DNA test for Degenerative Myelopathy (DM) was introduced by researcher Dr Joan Coates at the 2008 ABC, responsible breeders who want to "do the right thing" have been faced with a dilemma: doing the right thing for the entire breed may, or may not, be the same as doing the right thing for an individual breeder's own breeding program or peace of mind.

For example, *intellectually*, I know that with 57% of the breed At Risk and only 12.6% Clear, all breeders cannot breed their At Risk or Carrier boxers ONLY to the small percentage that are DM Clear. Genetically, that would have a truly devastating effect on our breed.

Nonetheless, *emotionally*, having had to take my beloved companion of 11 years on his final journey because of DM, despite that he was still in good spirits and otherwise in good health, I honestly don't know if I could *knowingly* do another breeding that might result in At Risk puppies.

A week-long discussion of how to use the DM test took place on the Showboxer-L email list a couple of weeks ago, when a breeder announced he was expecting a litter whose sire and dam were BOTH At Risk for DM. As was to be expected on the SB-L, where passions run high among the avid breeders and exhibitors who make up the majority of its membership, everyone had his or her own opinion about how to "correctly" and "ethically" use the DM test to make breeding decisions.

“Why on earth would anyone bother to do the test and then completely disregard the results?!”

The consensus of list members regarding the completely At Risk litter that two At Risk parents would produce seemed to be, “Why on earth would anyone bother to do the test and then completely disregard the results?!” But of course, those posters were responding to a very predictable negative outcome. Other breeding choices give us more positive outcomes, and the possibility of gradually breeding away from DM.

For a discussion of the other options available to boxer breeders as we embark on a long term plan to eradicate DM – the disease, not just the gene – see the following discussion of available breeding options and expected outcomes, posted to the SB-L by longtime California breeder Beth Pariseau:

1) Several times during this discussion, someone has commented that we should not make breeding decisions based ONLY on the DNA test for DM. I would agree – with the added comment that I know of NO ONE who does this. No one. Do some breeders emphasize DM more than others? Yes. Most that do are people who have lived through the nightmare of watching their fully aware Boxer slowly lose his dignity as DM progresses. But we do get it. It isn't the whole picture. It's just part of the picture.

From Dr Coates: "Summary: We recommend that dog breeders take into consideration the DM test results as they plan their breeding programs; however, they should not over-emphasize this test result. Instead, the test result is one factor among many in a balanced breeding program."

Source: <http://www.caninegeneticdiseases.net/DM/testDM.htm>

"Dogs that test A/G (carrier) or G/G (clear) are very unlikely to develop DM. Dogs that test A/A are likely to develop clinical signs of DM at some point as they age."

Source: <http://www.caninegeneticdiseases.net/DM/testDM.htm>

The "clear/normal" state seems to be dominant over the "affected" state – meaning that both the G/G (clear) and A/G (carriers) will be spared the ravages of this disease. It also means we don't need to line breed on "clear" dogs – a fact that minimizes the fears of narrowing the gene pool. An "at risk" to "carrier" breeding will at least give the puppies a 50-50 chance of avoiding DM, while giving the breeder a 50% chance of bringing in a G (normal/clear) gene to carry forward with as we move away from this disease.

Does an "at risk" to "carrier" breeding carry with it that chance of "at risk" puppies? It does. It also carries with it the chance of increasing the pool of A/G carriers. To gradually move away from DM, breeding "at risk" to "clear" is NOT our only option.

“I'd rather have old age onset DM than younger onset ARVC or cancer.”

2) "I'd rather have old age onset DM than younger onset ARVC or cancer." Me, too, but that's a false choice. We should look at the entire picture. Seldom will we be presented with a clear cut choice when the ONLY option is a good heart OR cancer OR DM. Maybe the options will turn out to be an imperfect ARVC het. positive to a DM carrier with one relative in the 3rd generation that had hemangiosarcoma. But "Good hearts, ahoy! DM, be damned!" will seldom be the only viable option. We should make the hard choices, as WE see them, and stop insisting that everyone approve of our choices. They won't. We shouldn't expect it.

3) "My dog might be DM "at risk," but at least he doesn't look like a Dane!" This might be true, but it's another false choice. It is possible to breed decent Boxers and consider DM as one factor in the choice of a breeding pair. If your Boxer is "at risk," he/she shouldn't be removed from the gene pool for that alone, but it should be considered when choosing a mate.

4) "We should practice fault offset breeding and DM should be given the same weight as any other fault." I don't disagree. But the follow-up would be that breeding "at risk" to "at risk" is NOT fault offset breeding

because it doubles up on a fault. At a minimum, breeding A/A (at risk) to A/G (carrier) gives us a 50% chance of improving on this "fault."

5) In a free society, we may criticize the choices of others. But the breed doesn't benefit unless we examine our OWN practices and do what we think is right. If I have a stud dog that's DM "at risk," I should so state. Might some breeders avoid him because of it? Of course! That's part of informed consent, and I should expect nothing different. What I'd prefer to see is carrier and clear bitches brought to him. If the owner of an "at risk" bitch was interested in using him, I'd want to review the complete picture - which would include age of onset of DM in family members. In my own opinion, families with an age of onset under 10 should consider DM to be a SERIOUS fault and breed "at risk" dogs *at a minimum* to "carriers". Those working with families of Boxers with an early (under 10) onset of DM should consider the families who will be buying pets from what they're told are well bred lines from "responsible" breeders.

Breeders have feet of clay. We'll make mistakes, but the biggest mistake is to choose ignorance. Do your informed best. Lead by example. Others will follow.



ABCF Memorial Endowment Fund

It was a bittersweet moment for The American Boxer Charitable Foundation when at the end of 2010, I received a package containing a check for what is the largest single donation in the history of the Foundation. This check was from the Estate of Wendy Wallner, DVM, who died over four years ago. We knew that the Foundation had been named as a primary beneficiary in Wendy's Will, but we were unsure of the amount until that envelope arrived.



First, I would like to publicly thank Barbara Bachman Barnes for the extraordinary effort she put forth as Executor of her dear friend Wendy's estate. The probate process was a long, involved, drawn-out process but Barbara stuck to it to be sure that Wendy's last wishes were carried out. It was a labor of love and she performed it admirably. Thank you Barbara for your outstanding tenacity to make sure every "i" was dotted and every "t" was crossed. You carried through your friends' wishes to the letter. It takes a true friend to be that dedicated.

For those of you who didn't know Wendy, you missed a very unique woman. She was lovely inside and out and would drop anything to help a friend or a Boxer. Wendy's love of our breed was obvious in everything she did and, for that reason, she became one of the original trustees of the Foundation when it was created and served in that capacity until her death in 2006. Her Boxers were her children and she loved each and every one of them as one would a child.

She was an active young practicing veterinarian and Boxer breeder when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was a brutal battle and she caught few breaks, but she fought with determination and grit. She was tenacious in that journey with cancer and taught those of us who knew her how to live with cancer and how to die with dignity. She left a legacy of love, caring and grace. It is a trite phrase, but those who knew her will never forget her. Those who didn't know her missed a very special lady.

By mentioning the American Boxer Charitable Foundation in your Will, you too can provide for the breed that has brought so much to all of us who love them. Give something back! Memorial donations and bequests are placed in the ABCF Endowment Fund. The corpus of the Endowment Fund can never be spent. Only a portion of what it earns may be spent for research which means that a gift to the Endowment will give to this breed we all love in perpetuity. You cannot ask for a donation to do more than that.

And, this is one case where size doesn't matter. The fact that you remember Boxers through the Foundation's Endowment Fund is what matters. Whatever you mention in your Will---be it memorabilia, keepsakes, stock, insurance, a specified amount, a percentage of what you have left---whatever you choose will help make a difference to this breed forever!

It's very simple to make a provision in your Will for the Foundation. You don't need to have to redo your Will. You can simply add a codicil. Be sure your attorney has the following information:

American Boxer Charitable Foundation

Memorial Endowment Fund

PO Box 8667

Spokane, WA 99203

Tax number ABCF TAX ID 91-1166044

EIN 38-3233119

Just think---whether your donation is large or small, it will fund Boxer health research FOREVER. What a wonderful legacy. Perpetuity in this "throwaway culture" is a treasure. Leave a legacy for your Boxers.

Those who have already made provisions in their Wills for the Boxer Legacy Endowment Fund are:

Stephanie and David Abraham, Joyce Baker Brown, Susan Bell, Maureen and John Chinakos, John Connolly, Sharon Fosseen, Margaret Krey, Karen Larson, Wendy Morawski, Velda Rounsaville, Audrey Schnell, Dr. and Mrs. William Truesdale, Sandy Vergamini, and Brian and Rachal Zembrycki.

Legacies that have already come to the Foundation Endowment Fund are: Estate of Juanita Burks, Estate of Carole Connolly, Estate of Florence Doty, Estate of Susan Finley, Estate of Vivian Plummer, Family of Anna Rosenstreich (Hexenhaus Boxers – Australia and New Zealand) and the Estate of Wendy Wallner.

If you have designated the Foundation in your Will or have instructed your family to be sure your memorabilia and treasures come to us, please let me know so I can add your name to this list. If you haven't yet done so, please consider the ABCF Memorial Endowment Fund. Your donation is a legacy.

For further information email hiview@mindspring.com or call (509) 998-6122. Your Boxers give you all they have and they are counting on you.....don't forget them.

Sharon Fosseen, Treasurer

American Boxer Charitable Foundation



MEMBERSHIP FORM

Fellow Boxer Lovers:

Any time is the right time to renew your membership in the American Boxer Charitable Foundation, Inc. As you're probably aware, the Foundation was created to fund research into the health problems that affect our beloved breed. To date, the ABCF has raised more money for health research than any other breed club. The money raised by the Foundation has funded studies in boxer cardiomyopathy, sub-aortic stenosis, thyroid disease, and various cancers including Mast Cell and lymphoma. The Foundation is also currently funding a study on degenerative myelopathy.

Support the research to help our Boxers live longer and healthier lives by becoming a member or renewing your membership in the American Boxer Charitable Foundation.

Remember, our research grant dollars are matched, dollar-for-dollar by the AKC Canine Health Foundation, thereby doubling the impact of our research.

Bobbi Compton, Membership Chairman American Boxer Charitable Foundation

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1. Select your membership level: \$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 Other

2. Select how you want to receive the ABCF Newsletter:

Online Via US Mail (Please add \$10 annually for postage)

Pay by check or money order payable to the American Boxer Charitable Foundation or Master Card or VISA or join or renew your membership online by choosing the "Online" option on the side navigation bar of the ABCF website (www.abcfoundation.org).

Amount: _____ Method of payment: Check Money Order MasterCard Visa

Signature: _____

Account number: _____ Expires: _____

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Country: _____ Phone number: _____

Email: _____

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