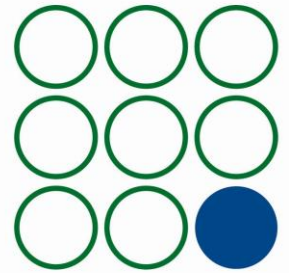




THE KENNEL CLUB
GENETICS CENTRE

AT THE ANIMAL HEALTH TRUST



media *release*

Monday 8 February 2016

GIVE A DOG A GENOME – FIRST TEN BREEDS SIGNED UP TO BE SEQUENCED ARE...

The goal to create the UK's largest canine genome bank has been 'lapped up' by the dog breeding community who don't want their breed to be 'left out' in the dog house!

In just two weeks since the project's official launch (Mon 25 January) close to 30 breeds have registered an interest in participating in the ground-breaking new research initiative, Give a Dog a Genome, from veterinary charity the Animal Health Trust.

Ten breeds have already 'jumped through hoops' to raise the £1,000 donation in record time. A further eleven breeds have pledged to raise the £1,000 required to be one of the 50 breeds whose DNA is to be sequenced using the latest technology available. Each £1,000 donation is to be matched by the Kennel Club Charitable Trust until 50 breeds have participated in the project.

The first ten breeds to raise their £1,000 donations, securing their breed's part in the Give a Dog a Genome project, are:

1. Tibetan Terrier
2. Grand Basset Griffon Vendéen

3. Pug (funded by an individual in memory of Biggles, a very special Pug)
4. Briard
5. Large Munsterlander
6. Bedlington Terrier
7. Finnish Lapphund
8. Hungarian Vizsla
9. Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever
10. Dachshund

The project has hit its first major milestone and is already a fifth of the way towards its goal to whole genome sequence DNA from 50 different dog breeds, creating the UK's largest canine genome bank. A further 11 breeds are signed up to the project and their donations are expected within the next three months.

The Give a Dog a Genome project will arm the AHT with a much more comprehensive understanding of the canine genome – all 2.4 billion letters of DNA, enough to stretch from Lands End to John O' Groats and back again if the DNA was a string and each letter was 1mm long! – in order to identify disease mutations more effectively in the future.

Dr Cathryn Mellersh, Head of the Kennel Club Genetics Centre at the AHT, said:

"We've been blown away by the response to the project so far and I'm just amazed that ten breeds have already supported the project, with many more breeds already starting to raise their £1,000 donation.

"The proactive attitude of so many breeds to get behind this project, in such a short space of time, really shows how much these breed communities care about doing all they can to try and keep their breeds healthy.

"The Dachshund community in particular were able to use Go Fund Me to organically raise the £1,000 donation online - in less than week! - and are keen to raise more money so that more than one variety of Dachshund can be included in the research.

"It's just fantastic to see such overwhelming support for what we're trying to do with this project. The knowledge we have the potential to gain from this genome bank will, in time, benefit all breeds, not just those 50 that are included now."

Caroline Kisko, Kennel Club Secretary, said: "We are delighted by how many breeds have shown interest in the Give a Dog a Genome project so far and are already adding to its success. It shows just how dedicated the dog community is to helping protect the health of pedigree dogs and we are impressed by the speed at which people have rallied together to raise the £1,000 donation to ensure their breed can be part of this ground breaking project."

Dachshund case study

The Dachshund community has collaborated with the AHT on numerous projects over the years and the Health Committee quickly "booked a place" to become one of the first ten breeds to support the project.

Roger Sainsbury BVM&S, MRCVS who chairs the Breed Council's Health Committee said: "We are delighted to be involved in this state-of-the-art project. This will produce a reference DNA sequence for the whole of the Dachshund's genetic makeup which will be an invaluable starting point for tests for genetic diseases and also for more fundamental genetic research.

"Remarkable advances in technology have made this possible - only 14 years ago the first sequencing of a dog's genome cost thirty million US dollars!

"Dachshund owners have been equally keen to rally round this project and an online fundraising page to "Give a Dachshund a Genome" raised over £1100 in just a week.

"This fundraising campaign, with its high visibility to Dachshund owners on social media, continues to raise awareness of the AHT's valuable work to help improve the health of Dachshunds."

For information on Give a Dog a Genome please go to: www.aht.org.uk/gdg

Ends



For further information, please contact:

Katherine Lawson, AHT press office, 01638 751000 ext 1511 or 07341 737 746

Photographs & Videos:

Images can be requested from the AHT press office.

Additional notes:

- The Animal Health Trust (AHT) is an independent charity, employing over 200 scientists, vets and support workers. It aims to improve the health and welfare of horses, dogs and cats through research. It also provides specialist referral services and continuous education to vets. Visit the website at www.aht.org.uk