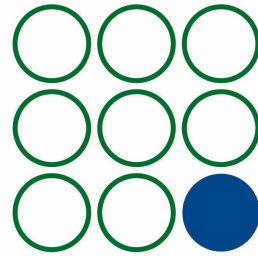


THE KENNEL CLUB
GENETICS CENTRE

AT THE ANIMAL HEALTH TRUST



media *release*

Embargo: No publication or broadcast before:

00:01am on Thursday, 26 May 2011

MATE SELECT LAUNCH SET TO TRANSFORM DOG HEALTH

The first phase of a revolutionary web tool will be launched that will help dog breeders to find the most suitable mate for their dog, based on how genetically healthy the offspring and future generations of dogs are likely to be.

The Mate Select service, developed in conjunction with scientists at the Animal Health Trust (AHT), will be available on the Kennel Club website. It will enable breeders to begin to assess the impact that a proposed mating between Kennel Club registered dogs will have on the genetic diversity of a breed, based on the tool's calculation of inbreeding coefficients. The service is intended to safeguard the future of pedigree breeds.

It will also be aligned to the Kennel Club's Health Test Results Finder, enabling breeders and puppy buyers to view the health test results for all Kennel Club registered dogs so that they can, as far as possible, ensure the good health of the puppies that they produce.

Ultimately, it is hoped that the service can also help further our understanding about the health status of cross breed and mixed breed dogs, about which there is little information.

Professor Jeff Sampson, Kennel Club Chief Scientific Advisor, said: “Mate Select is a groundbreaking service that will enable breeders to match the compatibility of two dogs based on the contribution that they will make to the long term health and genetic diversity of the breed. It is vital that genetic diversity is preserved so that future generations can continue to thrive.

“The service is also linked to the Kennel Club’s health test results finder so that breeders will be able to take various judgements into account when designing their breeding programmes. It does not replace or compromise the traditional art of the dog breeder, but its availability will give added confidence to breeders that the selections that they make will be for the long term benefit of the breed as a whole. It will drive demand for healthy dogs and encourage and support responsible breeding.”

Mate Select will include links to Kennel Club Accredited Breeders, whose members follow all of the recommended steps for good breeding practice, and list the health tests for different breeds that Accredited Breeders are required to use on their dogs. These requirements are continually updated as new tests are developed at the Kennel Club Canine Genetics Centre at the Animal Health Trust and elsewhere.

Sarah Blott, head of the quantitative genetics team at the Kennel Club Canine Genetics Centre, who has helped to develop the science behind Mate Select, commented: “Purebred dogs are an important part of our lives but we have a responsibility to use the information and science available to ensure that they are as healthy as possible.

“As science develops and our knowledge about dog health grows there have become an increasingly complex set of considerations that breeders need to take into account. Mate Select helps them to make breeding decisions that will prevent the decline of

genetic diversity and stop harmful genes from being passed down through the gene pools..”

The Mate Select Inbreeding Coefficient Calculator, which helps breeders to see what impact their breeding decisions are having on the genetic diversity of their breed, is populated by formulas developed at the Kennel Club Canine Genetics Centre at the AHT. The less genetically diverse a breed is the more chance there is that they will inherit two identical genes from both parents – which could be beneficial genes but could equally be harmful genes and two copies would mean that the resulting progeny would be clinically affected.

The Kennel Club banned close matings (mother/son, father/daughter and brother/sister) in 2009. Mate Select will enable breeders to be able to assess the impact that any mating will have on genetic diversity and use this in conjunction with a dog’s health test results in order to choose the best mating pairs that they can.

www.kcmateselect.org.uk

Ends

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Notes to Editors:

There has been substantial work and investment by the Kennel Club to help breeders to design responsible breeding programmes. Some of this work has laid the foundations for the Mate Select Service.

- **The Kennel Club Canine Genetics Centre at the Animal Health Trust** - In March 2009, the Kennel Club created a Canine Genetics Centre with the Animal Health Trust and invested £1.2 million to investigate the mutations responsible for 25 inherited diseases by 2014. There are currently 60 such DNA tests and Health Screening Schemes available to breeders to help ensure that healthy genes are passed down through the generations. The health test results for every Kennel Club registered dog are displayed on the Health Test results finder, which went online in 2010 and which now links to Mate Select.

The Kennel Club Charitable Trust's funding is also helping scientists at the Animal Health Trust to conduct research into developing better breeding strategies to maintain genetic diversity and improve selection away from disease. The inbreeding coefficient calculator on Mate Select has been developed as a result of this research.

- **Genetic Diversity** – Mate Select is part of a number of steps taken by the Kennel Club to maintain genetic diversity whilst preserving pedigree breeds. Such moves include a ban on close matings in 2009, the acceptance of dogs of unverified parentage onto the breed register and encouraging intervarietal mating and outcrossing – examples include the interbreeding of Bull Terriers and Miniature Bull Terriers to overcome a condition, PLL, in Minis and the introduction of a particular strain of Dalmatian (a Dalmatian crossed with a Pointer, carried out in the USA) to introduce the normal uric acid gene into the Dalmatian breed.
- **Kennel Club Accredited Breeder Scheme**
Mate Select has links that enable puppy buyers to find Kennel Club Accredited Breeders. This scheme was established in 2004 in order to support and encourage responsible breeding practice. Members of the scheme are required to follow certain rules, which include socialising their pups, keeping them in comfortable and clean whelping and rearing conditions and giving their dogs the required health tests for their breed before mating. They are subject to inspections from the Kennel Club and if the health test results indicate that a mating is not desirable then the litters will not be registered as Accredited Breeder puppies. This scheme was designed to give puppy buyers an easy way to identify and find responsible breeders.