

Conference Explores Advances in Dog Health

AKC Canine Health Foundation's sixth National Canine Health Conference.

October 24, 2005 Breed enthusiasts from across the nation gathered in St. Louis this past weekend to learn about recent advances in canine health at the American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundations sixth biennial National Parent Club Canine Health Conference.

The AKC Canine Health Foundation is a non-profit organization that raises funds for canine health research.

Conference attendees all members of AKC national parent clubs, which represent dog fanciers of a single breed received updated information on canine cancer, cell therapy, reproduction, nutrition, canine neurological disease, endocrine disorders, cardiology research and vaccination protocols.

The event was sponsored by the AKC and Nestle Purina Petcare Co.

The keynote speaker, Kerstin Lindblad-Toh, PhD, of the Broad Institute at MIT, addressed the ways in which the canine genome project can help scientists identify genes that cause various diseases in dogs.

By comparing the genes of healthy dogs to dogs suffering from a particular disease, scientists should be able to pinpoint the gene or genes most likely to cause the disease, she said. Identification of the defective genes could lead to improved treatment of the disease in dogs and humans.

Dr. Lindblad-Toh and her colleagues at the Broad Institute are currently working on identifying the genes that cause osteosarcoma (bone cancer) in dogs.

To produce the study, the researchers need pet owners to send in samples of DNA from healthy purebred dogs, as well as DNA from purebred dogs suffering from bone cancer, Lindblad-Toh said. Blood samples collected by a veterinarian are the best source of high-quality DNA, she said.

Breeds of particular importance to the bone cancer study include rottweilers, greyhounds, leonbergers, great Danes, St. Bernards, mastiffs, bullmastiffs, Labrador retrievers, Irish wolfhounds, Rhodesian ridgebacks, golden retrievers, Newfoundlands and Scottish deerhounds.

More information on making a donation and the osteosarcoma study is available online at Broad.