

Researchers Identify Hereditary Cataract Mutation in Staffordshire Bull Terriers

Scientists have developed a DNA test for the disease that may reduce its presence in the breed.

Researchers at the Animal Health Trust, a Newmarket, England-based animal health organization, say they have identified the genetic mutation that causes hereditary cataracts in Staffordshire bull terriers. Terriers with the condition usually start manifesting signs at 3 months, and are completely blind within 18 months to two years.

The scientist say that dogs that develop the disease have two copies of the genetic mutation, whereas carriers have only one copy. Carriers are dogs that do not have clinical signs of the disease, but can still pass it along to their offspring.

The Trust has developed a DNA test for the condition, which will be available beginning Jan. 1, 2006, reports the American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundation, which helped support the research. Breeders can reduce the incidence of the disease by not breeding carriers of the mutation.

Researchers at the Trust believe that the mutation they have identified may also cause juvenile hereditary cataracts in Boston terriers. They have requested DNA samples from affected Boston Terriers or those that are known carriers of the disease to verify this theory.

The Trust also say the mutation may cause hereditary cataracts in other breeds, so it is accepting DNA samples from any purebred dog that is a known carrier of the disease.

For more information about sending samples, please email Dr. Cathryn Mellersh at: cathryn.mellersh@aht.org.uk

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