Cerebellar Ataxia of American Staffordshire Terrier (AmStaff)

A severe neurological disease prevented thanks to a DNA test

Cerebellar Ataxia leads to a nervous system degeneration. About 40% of AmStaff are carriers of the gene responsible for the disease. A reliable DNA test can screen stud dogs and brood bitches, in order to adapt matings and avoid birth of affected puppies and spread of the disease in the breed.

A severe hereditary disease

Cerebellar Ataxia leads to a nervous system degeneration. The first symptoms appear between 3 and 5 years: "Wobbly" gait, tremors, incoordination, loss of balance. At the final stage, the dog is unable to move and euthanasia is generally practiced.

A frequent disease

More than 40% of AmStaff are carriers of the genetic mutation responsible of Cerebellar Ataxia. A breeder can mate without noticing a male « carrier » and a female « carrier » and produce a litter containing affected puppies.

A dog « carrier » of the mutation will not develop the disease but transmits it to 50% of the puppies. A stallion « carrier » of the mutation which is used a lot for reproduction, spreads the disease through the breed and helps to increase the frequency of the mutation and multiply the number of affected dogs.

A preventable disease

A puppy can be affected if his two parents are carriers of the mutation. Breeders unaware of Cerebellar Ataxia can mate stud dogs and brood bitches carriers of the mutation and produce affected puppies which will not develop the disease before from 3 years old.

A DNA test called NCL-A, can detect Cerebellar Ataxia of American Staffordshire Terrier with a reliability above 99%

Avoid the birth of affected puppies

In order to secure its kennel and avoid the risk of production of affected puppies, the breeder must screen its breeding dogs thanks to the NCL-A DNA test.

When acquiring a puppy for breeding or when a stud dog is used for a mating, the breeder verifies the genetic status of the dog for American Staffordshire Terrier asking for the result of the NCL-A DNA test.

A DNA test easy to perform

The veterinarian performs a simple cheek swab and sends it to the laboratory. The result, delivered within few days, indicates if the tested dog is clear, carrier or affected for Cerebellar Ataxia. A genetic certificate displaying the result must be used as a guarantee for a mating or to justify the sale of puppies clear of Cerebellar Ataxia.

The veterinarian who notices early neurological issues in a young AmStaff puppy can process a DNA test to confirm or refute the diagnosis of Cerebellar Ataxia. If the dog is affected, parents have to be screened as well.

A breeder who knows the genetic status of the dog can select its breeding dogs, adapt matings, avoid the birth of affected puppies and limit the spread of this severe neurological disease in the breed.

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