



# Entlebook

**NATIONAL ENTEBUCHER MOUNTAIN DOG ASSOCIATION**

Entlebook Official Newsletter

November 1999

## President's Letter

Hello Members Old and New,

It's been just over a year and NEMDA is growing strong. By the time you read this, chances are we will have passed the 100th member mark! It is so encouraging to see NEMDA building a strong foundation to support us into the millennium as we continue to work for the improved health and well being of the breed. I would like to thank each and every member for your part in making this happen. Your dues and contributions have made progress possible, and your input has been an integral part of shaping NEMDA. Please take a moment to fill out the Ballot and Member Survey (attached) to ensure that NEMDA is serving your interests in the year to come.

Thank you also to all board and committee members for your efforts in getting this club up and running. NEMDA is lucky to have such a hard working bunch of volunteers, and, of course, we can always use more! We are getting close to having a recognized breed registry, thank you Dr. Hahn. We have a committee translating the history of the Entlebucher and compiling the breeds' history in North America. The Breed Rescue committee is hard at work helping to find new homes for our unfortunate unwanted Entlebuchers. The Health and Genetics committee has begun keeping a database of Entlebucher health problems. You have all encountered the work of our Membership and Newsletter committees. The Public Relations & Education committee is seeking funding for Entlebucher PRA research. And finally, the Publicity and Promotions committee is keeping up with the NEMDA advertisements you may have seen in popular canine publications and is working on the upcoming NEMDA web site. I want to thank ALL the many people who have worked so hard to get us this far and for all the work yet to be done.

Happy holidays and happy New Year to you and your Entlebucher! We look forward to hearing from you in the year 2000!

Sincerely,

*Jane Torina*

## The Heartbreak of PRA

by Lynda Hruby

When John and I decided to get a little male Entle from Germany, our plans were to select the perfect pup for the gene pool so we could eventually use him as a stud dog. He arrived at the age of 11 weeks and we traveled to Los Angeles to pick him up. We had the pleasure of meeting Nancy Farnsworth, another Entle owner, at that time. She was picking up the little female from the same breeder. So Hunter and his sister Heidi arrived, a little dazed from their long journey but cute as anything.

Hunter came home to British Columbia and met his new partner, Cassie, our first Entlebucher. Well it wasn't love at first sight on Cassie's part but she warmed up to the pup very quickly. As Hunter grew we knew we had a great looking dog and hopefully a great stud dog to follow in the footsteps of his champion ancestors.

Then at 18 months of age I took him to our Ophthalmologist for a preliminary eye examination and Dr. Lewis noticed something in his eyes, a reflective spot in

**Membership Renewal  
due  
January 1, 2000  
Application page 13**

### Inside

North West Dog Fest	3
Entlebucher Statues	4
Elder vs. Oregon	5
Intelligent Training Tips	6
Breeder's Corner	7
CERF Report	7
Thanks, Foster Homes	8
August Meeting	8
Annual Reports	9
Membership Dues	11
Registry Update	11
NEMDA BCOE	12
Happy Holidays	12
Entle Art Contest	12
New Members	13
Financial Report	13
Board and Committees	14
Ballot and Survey	15
Genetic Database Form	17

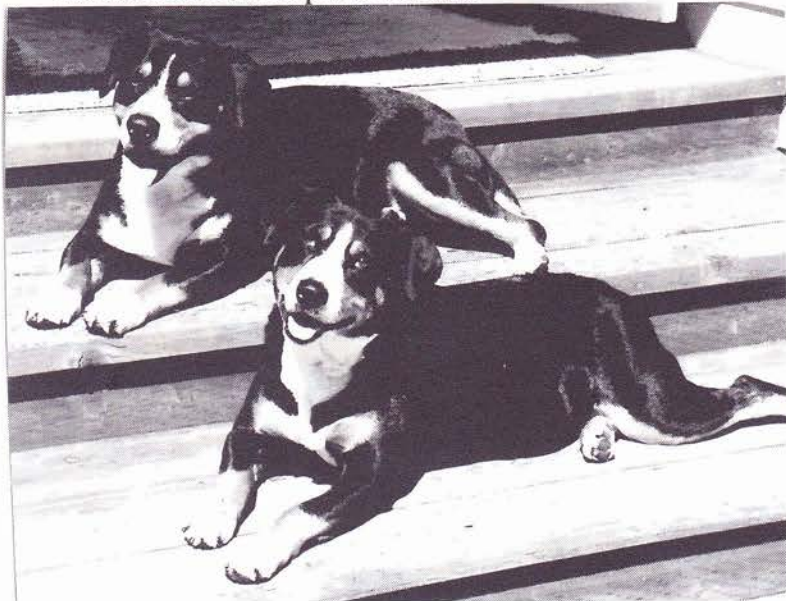
(PRA, continued from page 1)

both eyes. He reserved his judgment; his feeling was probable progressive retinal atrophy (PRA), but he wanted to see Hunter again when he turned two years old. He mentioned it was quite rare to see signs of PRA in a dog so young.

I was heartbroken and I know John was too. It wasn't just the fact that we could not use him for stud, that was a minor disappointment, but the knowledge that our beautiful boy would slowly go blind was awful.

At the age of two, we took Hunter back for his eye test and decided to do an additional examination called an ERG. This examination really shows the state of the eyes and how they deal with light. It sealed the diagnosis as definite PRA. I guess you always hope that the first finding was wrong but this time we knew for sure and the hurt came back all over again.

Now it was time to make a difference and help the breed. We had Hunter's blood samples taken and sent them down to Dr. Petersen-Jones at Michigan State University, PRA Research Department for Small Animals. After success with other breeds, he has taken on the challenge of developing a DNA test for our Entlebuchers, so in the future we will be able to test the puppies and know which ones carry the PRA gene. This will be wonderful for the breed and eventually we can wipe out this terrible disease and save the owners heartbreak when they find out that their beloved pet is afflicted.



Hunter and Cassie

I do have a request to all Entle owners, please have your dog's eyes tested! European statistics say that 1 in 2 Entlebuchers have posterior polar cataracts and 1 in 4 have PRA with no lines clear (not carrying the gene) of either disease. So you can

understand why I do not believe that NEMDA President Jane Torma, and John and I coincidentally have the only two PRA afflicted dogs in North America. I believe that there are more dogs with PRA out there, but because they are pets and not intended for breeding, they may have not had a CERF test done. Do it anyway, please! If your dog is one of the unfortunate few to be affected, why not find out early and make the best of it by helping the future of the breed. Just call your veterinarian for a referral to a board-certified ophthalmologist, set up an appointment for a CERF exam, and take along a copy of the article by Dr. Bernhard Speiss (page 3).

It is a simple exam and not too expensive (US\$45 in the San Francisco area which tends to be more expensive). NEMDA is so eager to make this DNA research program a reality that funding has been approved to assist owners who send blood samples of affected dogs in to the project by reimbursing \$20.00.

Dr. Petersen-Jones needs 15 blood samples to begin real DNA work. Participation can be completely anonymous and is essential to the healthy future of the breed. Dr. Petersen-Jones can be contacted directly to participate on an anonymous basis.

Because these eye problems are usually late onset, not appearing until four or five years of age, most owners just think their dog is slowing down with age, but it could very easily be due to eye disease. Wouldn't you want to know and have the opportunity to help future generations? Breeders have their dog's eyes tested once a year, but pet owners should have the eyes done at least once, around the age of 4 years once any PRA is likely to show itself. If you can have it done sooner and more frequently, all the better, but please have your dog tested at least once late enough to ensure that if there is disease it will be diagnosable.

If you need more information please contact me at (604) 541-2822 or Lynda\_Hruby@bc.sympatico.ca, or contact Jane Torma, at (608) 348-8723 or jptorma@pcii.net. If you love the breed as much as we do, I know that you will take this opportunity to make a difference and get your dog's eyes examine. Anything you can do to help this program along would be very much appreciated. Thank you.

But there is a wonderful upside to my story and it comes with the fact that Hunter and Cassie are great pals. Dr. Lewis said that as Hunter begins to lose his sight, Cassie

(PRA continued from page 2)

would be his eyes. She already leads the way most dark evenings so I suppose he is right. It's a great comfort to know he will be helped along the way. I often wonder if because of this problem he has developed into a more mellow and loving lad with the cuddle position high on his agenda. We are very lucky to have him as part of our Hruby Zoo!

*If you have a PRA afflicted Entlebucher, please contact:*

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## **Inherited Ocular Diseases in the Entlebucher Mountain Dog**

by Prof. Dr. Bernhard M. Spiess  
University of Zurich, Switzerland

*This article is the English abstract of a longer article which was published in German in a Swiss periodical in 1994. NEMDA members Wilhelm and Christianne Radermacher have translated much of the longer article. The first two paragraphs below are from the Radermacher's translation while the remainder was originally published in English as well as German.*

Inherited ocular diseases aren't uncommon in pure breeds. As many as 147 different breeds with different defects are known (Rubin, 1989). Increased eye diseases in specific breeds has led to the inclusion of an eye examination as a part of the breeding approval process along with [hip] x-rays and behavioral examination. These mass screenings are now quite common both domestically [Switzerland] and abroad.

As early as 1969, the first inherited ocular disease was discovered in the Entlebucher. In 1974, seven cases had been published (Kraehenmann, 1974). In the middle of the 1980's, after a long period in which no new cases had shown up, an increase of inherited ocular disease showed up in the Netherlands. This initiated examinations, including the ophthalmoscopic examination of as many dogs as possible. The following are the results of these examinations.

Ophthalmoscopic examinations of 276 Entlebucher Mountain Dogs between 1987 and 1992 revealed a high incidence of inherited ocular diseases in this particular breed.

A posterior polar cataract was seen in 42.4% of dogs examined. This cataract develops between one and two years of age and is in the majority of cases stationary. Development of mature cataracts was noticed in 8% of dogs with polar opacities.

A progressive retinal degeneration (rod/cone-abiopathy) was observed in 24.9% of the dogs examined. The fundus abnormalities are comparable to other forms of retinal degeneration, such as hyperreflectivity of the tapetal fundus, attenuation of the retinal vasculature, depigmentation of the non tapetal fundus, and pallor of the optic disc. Visual deficits were first seen at the age of 3 years, the majority of affected dogs going blind between 6 and 8 years of age.

As a third suspected inherited ocular disease, glaucoma was seen in 3.3% of the dogs examined. Glaucoma affects older animals. In the nine cases examined by gonioscopy goniodysgenesis was observed. Initially, glaucoma occurs unilaterally, but the opposite eye may also become affected, in which case animals go blind. Pedigree analysis revealed an autosomal recessive mode of inheritance for the cataracts and the PRA, whereas the mode of transmission is unclear for the glaucoma. 11.9% of the dogs examined had more than one inherited eye disease.

*Copies of the entire article in German including photographs are available from NEMDA Health and Genetics chair, Teri Beeman. If your veterinary professional has any questions, please contact Prof. Dr. Bernhard M. Spiess, Vet.-Chirurg. Klinik der Universität Zurich, Wisterhurerstrasse 260, CH-8057, Zurich, Switzerland. Phone 01.365.11.11 Fax 01.311.91.44  
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## **North West Dog Fest**

by Gina Thomas and Kathy Marshall

We had a great time at the first North West Dog Fest over the Labor Day Weekend. It was held at Stillpoint Acres, AKA Eagleheart Entlebuchers, AKA Shaman and Bliss' s place in Saint Helens, Oregon. Over a three-day period we had about 20 people, 12 Entlebuchers, five Bernese Mountain Dogs and one Kelpie.

It was so much fun to see the two Swiss Mountain Dog breeds together. It's as if they recognize each other - the Berners thinking that the Entles are small Berners. You can really see the difference between the energy levels of the