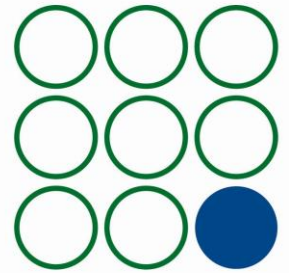




THE KENNEL CLUB
GENETICS CENTRE

AT THE ANIMAL HEALTH TRUST



media *release*

Friday 4 March 2016

GIVE A DOG A GENOME SOARS PAST HALFWAY MILESTONE AS 30 BREEDS COMMIT TO PROJECT, AND MANY MORE PLEDGE TO RAISE FUNDS

30 of the 50 places on the Animal Health Trust's pioneering Give a Dog a Genome project have been secured by eager breeds, keen to help the AHT create the UK's largest canine genome bank and advance the veterinary charity's inherited disease research

As of Friday 4 of March, the first 30 places on the Give a Dog a Genome project have been secured by breeds of all shapes and sizes, seeing the project soar past the halfway milestone in just five and a half weeks since its launch (25 January).

Many more breeds have pledged their support and have started raising the £1,000 donation required to help meet the whole genome sequencing costs, which are match funded by the Kennel Club Charitable Trust. More information on which breeds these are can be found online at: www.aht.org.uk/gdg

By whole genome sequencing DNA from 50 different dog breeds, the Kennel Club Genetics Centre at the Animal Health Trust (AHT) aims to gain a much more comprehensive understanding of the canine genome (all 2.4 billion letters of DNA) as a permanent resource for all future inherited disease investigations at the AHT.

Dr Cathryn Mellersh, Head of the Kennel Club Genetics Centre at the AHT, said: "I've been completely blown away by the speed with which so many breeds have not only pledged their support for this project, but also successfully raised their donation so that the genome sequencing can go ahead.

"It's really amazing to see such a high level of support in such a short amount of time. We're already starting to look at ways to expand the funding available, or run the project again next year, so don't be disappointed if your breed can't be included at this point in time. The Give a Dog a Genome project has the potential to improve our research capabilities and expertise to the benefit of all breeds, not just those 50 whose DNA is included at this stage, and I am very encouraged that so many breed communities appreciate the project's potential.

"The 'genome bank' we're going to create will enable me and my team to look very closely at the genetic makeup of these 50 breeds and use the variation that we discover as a tool in all future inherited disease investigations at the AHT. It's about working together to create a central resource which, once analysed, can be used as a basis for any genetic investigation in the future, making our research a lot faster and, hopefully, even more effective. By utilising the advances in genome sequencing technology we're taking canine inherited disease research to the next level, and that's really exciting for the future health of purebred dogs.

"We've now got a lot of work ahead of us to work with all of these breeds to select the dogs whose genomes will be sequenced, send the samples off for sequencing and then to start analysing the genomes."

Caroline Kisko, Kennel Club Secretary, said: "The number of breed communities that have rallied behind the project and expressed support in such a short space of time goes to show just how dedicated they are to helping protect and maintain the health of their breed.

"It is very encouraging to see the reaction to the Give a Dog a Genome project as it could be of such a benefit to all breeds, not just those fifty who will be involved at this point, and is a great example of the fantastic work being carried out by the Kennel Club Genetics Centre at the Animal Health Trust."

First 30 breeds to secure their place on the Give a Dog a Genome project:

1. Affenpinscher
2. Beagle
3. Bearded Collie
4. Bedlington Terrier
5. Border terrier
6. Briards
7. Chinese Crested
8. Dachshund
9. Finnish Lapphund
10. Flatcoated Retriever
11. GBGV
12. Glen of Imaal Terrier
13. Gordon Setter
14. Griffon Bruxellois
15. Hungarian Vizsla (Smooth)
16. Irish Setter
17. Italian Spinone
18. Keeshond
19. Lagotto Romagnolo
20. Lakeland terrier
21. Large Munsterlander
22. Leonberger
23. Norwegian Buhund
24. Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever
25. Old English Sheepdogs
26. Otterhound
27. Pug*
28. Shar pei
29. Soft-coated Wheaten Terrier
30. Tibetan terrier

*Pug genome will be sequenced in addition to the 50 breeds as the genome has been fully funded by an individual in memory of Biggles, a very special Pug.

For more information please go to: www.aht.org.uk/gdg

Ends



For further information, please contact:

Katherine Lawson, AHT press office, 01638 751000 ext 1511 or 07341 737 746

Photographs & Videos:

Images can be requested from the AHT press office.

Additional notes:

- The Animal Health Trust (AHT) is an independent charity, employing over 200 scientists, vets and support workers. It aims to improve the health and welfare of horses, dogs and cats through research. It also provides specialist referral services and continuous education to vets. Visit the website at www.aht.org.uk