



# **media release**

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## **ERADICATION OF HIP AND ELBOW DYSPLASIA A STEP CLOSER**

**Scientists launch study aiming to eradicate painful disease in Labrador Retrievers**

The eradication of hip and elbow dysplasia in Labrador Retrievers has taken a step forward with the launch of a new study.

There is no cure for this developmental disease which affects up to one in five Labrador Retrievers, often causing pain, dislocation of the joints and leading to lameness.

Scientists from the Animal Health Trust, The Roslin Institute and the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies at the University of Edinburgh have launched a study which aims to create a diagnostic test that will allow breeders to assess genetic risk for hip and elbow dysplasia in their dogs.

Dr Sarah Blott, from the Animal Health Trust, said: "Currently the screening process for hip and elbow dysplasia is costly and requires dogs to undergo general anaesthetic (GA) so they can be x-rayed.

"Through our study we hope to create a non-invasive DNA-based test that will allow breeders to test much earlier than is currently possible and without the use of GA."

The Labrador Retriever is the most popular dog breed in the UK and worldwide. There were more than 40,000 puppies registered with The Kennel Club in 2010. The development of a DNA test will benefit dogs around the world by enabling breeders to make more informed breeding choices.

The introduction of a DNA test to identify genetic risk of hip and elbow dysplasia will:

- improve welfare as it will not require dogs to undergo anaesthesia or be exposed to x-rays to test for the diseases
- allow breeders to test dogs much earlier than is currently possible. Currently dogs cannot be tested until they are 12 months old (BVA/KC scheme)
- improve the ability of breeders to select against these debilitating diseases
- result in much quicker progress towards the goal of eradicating hip and elbow dysplasia.

Dr Pam Wiener, from The Roslin Institute, said: "We're very grateful to the BBSRC for funding this study. If we are able to gather enough information and samples there is a very real possibility that in the next few years we will be able to develop a DNA test that will make a major contribution towards eradicating hip and elbow dysplasia in Labrador Retrievers.

"It is also likely that we will be able to use what we learn from the Labrador Retriever study to benefit dogs of other breeds and to prevent other diseases."

To collect information for the study a simple questionnaire is being sent, through The Kennel Club, to owners of Kennel Club registered Hip Scored Labrador Retrievers who were born between 2004 and 2007. The study group is hoping to obtain questionnaires and samples from at least 2,000 Labrador Retrievers.

If you have a Kennel Club registered Hip Scored Labrador Retriever aged between four and seven years old and would like to participate in the study, please visit the AHT website ([www.aht.org.uk/labrador.html](http://www.aht.org.uk/labrador.html)) or email [melissa.fitzgibbon@aht.org.uk](mailto:melissa.fitzgibbon@aht.org.uk)

Once questionnaires have been received, the AHT will send each participant a DNA sampling kit to enable owners to provide a DNA sample from their dog through a simple mouth swab. Owners providing the first 1,500 analysed DNA samples will receive a free genetic profile for hip and elbow dysplasia on their dog.

### **Ends**

#### **For further information, please contact:**

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#### **Photographs:**

Labrador Retriever photos are available on request from the AHT press office.

#### **Additional notes:**

- The Animal Health Trust 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](http://www.aht.org.uk)
- The Roslin Institute (incorporated with the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies at the University of Edinburgh) undertakes top-class basic and translational science to tackle some of the most pressing issues in animal health and welfare, their implications for human health and for the role of animals in the food chain. Visit the website at [www.roslin.ed.ac.uk](http://www.roslin.ed.ac.uk)
- BBSRC is the UK funding agency for research in the life sciences and the largest single public funder of agriculture and food-related research. Sponsored by Government, in 2010/11 BBSRC is investing around £470 million in a wide range of research that makes a significant contribution to the quality of life in the UK and beyond and supports a number of important industrial stakeholders, including the agriculture, food, chemical, healthcare

and pharmaceutical sectors. BBSRC provides institute strategic research grants to the following:

The Babraham Institute, Institute for Animal Health, Institute for Biological, Environmental and Rural Studies (Aberystwyth University), Institute of Food Research, John Innes Centre, The Genome Analysis Centre, The Roslin Institute (University of Edinburgh) and Rothamsted Research.

The Institutes conduct long-term, mission-oriented research using specialist facilities. They have strong interactions with industry, Government departments and other end-users of their research.

For more information see: <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk>