

## MDV UPDATED 10/11

*By Carol Faulk*

MVD (mitral valve disease) is a problem in our breed. Some breeders may deny this, but I believe they are sticking their heads in the sand. Do not try to point a finger at any one dog, or at any particular breeder's line because the problem is everywhere. The donor-advised fund that ANTA has set up at Canine Health to research this disease, "The Friends of Norfolk Terrier DAF" is very specific. Funds can only be used for MVD research in the Norfolk terrier. The original phase of the study completed last spring, and presented this past summer by Dr. Oyama ACVIM/Cardiology is very telling.

There were 48 dogs and bitches included in the study were ages six and over, and all received echo-cardiograms, EKGs, complete blood work (including a relatively new test known as a proBNP), as well as a comprehensive questionnaire regarding nutritional and environmental factors. Echocardiograms revealed evidence of DMVD (degenerative mitral valve disease) in 41 terriers. That is 85%!!! Of those 41 dogs, 18 dogs, or 38%, did not have an auscultable murmur. These 18 dogs are eligible to receive an OFA cardiac clearance. Is there anything worse than being told your dog is normal, when in fact, he is affected, and capable of passing this problem along to the next generation?

Although CHF refused to even consider a \$55,000 grant proposal by Dr. Oyama for peer review, we have been granted a \$12,000 Acorn grant to follow the 18 dogs that had no murmur, but did have echo-cardiographic evidence of the disease. Hopefully, we will be screening these dogs within the next few months. These dogs will receive the same comprehensive screenings done in the original study. Those dogs with normal results (which were few and far between) will also be reexamined.

In the meantime, what do we as breeders do? First and foremost, ALL dogs used for breeding should have a cardiac ultrasound BEFORE they are bred. Just because a two year old dog or bitch auscults normally does not mean he or she is free of MVD. We have seen leakage in

dogs as young as 18 months. Look at CHIC numbers, as the NTC (Norfolk Terrier Club) requires a cardiac echo as one of the three requirements to receive a CHIC number. The other two required tests, and OFA patella exam, and a CERF eye exam, should be noted. Remember - a CHIC number does not mean a dog has all normal results for the tests required, but simply that you have done the testing, and made it public. In addition, make sure that the two or three year old that is now five or six has been retested for both heart and eye clearances. Breed to older stud dogs that have continued to update their clearances. I believe breeding stock should be retested for heart and eye clearances every two to three years, until perhaps the age of ten. If a popular stud dog received a CHIC number when he was two, but at the age of six has not had his heart or eyes rechecked, think twice before you breed. Ask the owner if he or she is willing to update these clearances. For eyes and ears, once is not enough.

We cannot throw out all breeding stock with trivial leakage or other minor evidence of MVD. But trivial leakage at two is different from trivial leakage at six or seven. Talk with the cardiologist who is doing the screening, and ask for his opinion. If he does not seem up-to-date on Norfolk terriers in particular, refer him to Dr. Oyama's study for his edification. If your very worthy bitch turns up with trivial leakage at age six, and you want to breed her, look for an older stud dog that has continued to have updated echoes. Be honest with yourself, be honest with fellow breeders, do your homework, and follow the pups you produce. Encourage all puppy buyers to report back to you with any problems they may have. As good, responsible breeders, we are in this together.

