

TOP 20 DOG ADDED TO CARDIO REGISTRY

By Rod Humphries

Beverly Seielstad of Encore Doberman Kennel—who says she is “opening the door for other responsible breeders and owners” -- has announced that current Top 20 dog, Ch. Foxfire’s Magic Dragon, has been diagnosed with dilated cardiomyopathy.

Seielstad, who has had Dobermans for more than 50 years, said Magic Dragon will be added to the Responsible Doberman Breeders’ and Owners’ Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM) Registry and will not be bred again.

“I want to be very emphatic about this. You (Rod Humphries) started by announcing your nine dogs which died of cardio...now I want to set an example. I have opened the door for other responsible breeders and owners. I want them to step through that door and do the right thing. Even though we do not have a genetic test, they can physically test and step up and publicly register dogs which have cardio,” she added.

Prompted by new scientific information on DCM released in the last issue of this magazine (February 2008), Seielstad took a seemingly healthy Magic Dragon, who is four-and-a-half years of age, to Texas A & M University where he was found to be in an early stage of the disease.

“I am making a public announcement because it is the honest and right thing to do,” she told me. “There are too many people involved – too much heartache for puppy owners down the road for me to remain silent.”

“I want to set an example for other breeders and owners to face up to this problem and do something before we are too far gone,” she added.

Seielstad said that Magic Dragon, the sire of 10 champions to date, had been bred to 21 bitches and had 102 puppies already born and two more litters on the way. She expects that his offspring will eventually total approximately 120 puppies.

A study led by Dr. Kathryn Meurs of Washington State University recently determined the mode of inheritance of DCM in Dobermans to be autosomal dominant. In that mode it takes only one affected parent to pass on the disease.

A single parent (dog or bitch), which has one copy of the mutated gene, will pass it on to at least 50 percent of its offspring. If an animal has two copies of the mutated gene then 100 percent of its offspring will inherit the disease. If the sire and dam both have only one copy of the gene then 75 percent of the offspring will be affected with DCM. All percentages are true over a large sample size.

There are no classic “carriers” as in autosomal recessive mode of inheritance. A Doberman who is heterozygous (one copy of the bad gene and one good copy) will actually have the disease.

Seielstad said the fact that Magic Dragon has the disease means he will pass it on to at least 60 of his 120 puppies. If he has two copies of the DCM gene then all 120 puppies will have the disease.

“I cannot in all honesty and good faith **not** release this publicly,” she said. “When they told me the news at Texas A & M University I was numb. I have cried a lot and it is devastating to me to have such a wonderful friend given a death sentence...and I do not wish this experience on anybody.”

“I will send the Texas A & M report to the owners of the bitches bred to him and I will ask them to contact every puppy owner. I will suggest that all of his offspring be tested regularly and careful consideration be taken in any breeding.

“Also, I believe every Doberman breeder and owner, regardless of blood lines, should regularly test their breeding stock and if they have cardio, then do the same as I have done. Only then will we start to make a dent on this huge problem,” she added.

Magic Dragon was a Top 20 contender in 2007 and will repeat this year. He was a DPCA Award of Merit winner in 2006 and has multiple best in specialty show victories.

Seielstad, of Bella Vista, Arkansas, purchased her first Doberman 50 years ago from Brent and Vivian Edward of the famous Rancho Dobes kennel. She has also been a leading breeder of Arabian horses.

She contacted me to go over the information I had written in the last issue of the magazine before heading to Texas A & M University for the tests. She was adamant that if Magic Dragon came back positive she would go public.

When she called me with the sad news, I told her I was extremely sorry and truly understood her personal grief. But I also commended her courage and honesty in taking the steps she has taken. I told her I was proud of her and together we agreed that by both of us going public on our losses to DCM that it might prompt others to step up and fight this hugely destructive force in our breed.

I started the registry in the last issue of The Doberman Pinscher Magazine with nine of my Dobermans who died at home from DCM. They included Ch. Bikila's Jet Setter of Marks-Tey; Bikila's Nemo of Marks-Tey; Bikila's Nadia of Marks-Tey; Ch. Bikila's Pandora of Marks-Tey; Bikila's Quasar of Marks-Tey; Bikila's Rowdy of Marks-Tey; Bikila's Ricochet of Marks-Tey; Bikila's Samantha of Marks-Tey and Bikila's Ulrika of Marks-Tey (see the list and pedigrees in the February 2008 issue).

An interactive website where breeders and owners can lodge verifiable information is needed for the Responsible Doberman Breeders' and Owners' Dilated Cardiomyopathy Registry. The American Doberman Pinscher Education Foundation, which is being resurrected after the death of Frank Grover, was mentioned as a possible home for the DCM registry. However, the four-man board has opted out of hosting this registry.

I am seeking an appropriate established website and would welcome help or suggestions from anyone interested in the project. I would like to put together a panel of like-minded breeders who can oversee and consult on the project. The registry would not only contain dogs diagnosed with DCM, but those which may be clear of the disease. Verification by a veterinarian – including current cardiac testing information --would be necessary.

I have set up a new email address especially for DCM registry information or questions: bikiladobermans@aol.com.