



FCI Office

Place Albert 1er, 13
B-6530 THUIN
BELGIQUE
info@fci.be

The Kennel Club

Clarges Street
London, W1J 8AB
UK
hbs@thekennelclub.org.uk

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Health and breeding in the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel breed – suggestion for an outcross project

The amount of scientific literature on the disease situation in the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel breed is substantial and increasing. The two most prevalent and serious conditions are syringomyelia/chiari-like malformation and mitral valve disease.

Syringomyelia/chiari-like malformation may result in severe pain and neurological symptoms. *Chiari-like malformation* is an underdevelopment of the occipital bone (the back of the head, commonly known as “skull too small for the brain”), a condition that occurs in almost 100 % of cavaliers today. This skull malformation may lead to *syringomyelia* through compression of brain segments, changes in flow of cerebrospinal fluid and formation of fluid filled cavities in the spinal cord. Researchers claim that approximately 70 % of cavaliers have syringomyelia, for many individuals resulting in symptoms like severe pain and/or neurological symptoms.

Mitral valve disease is a condition where one of the heart valves do not close efficiently, resulting in backflow of blood during heartbeat. The backflow is recognized as a heart murmur by veterinarians, and may in time result in cardiac failure. Reported prevalence of heart murmur is as high as 40-50 % at five years of age and 90-100 % at 10 years of age.

The situation for the breed is very serious. With two such prevalent conditions with high potential impact on dog welfare, it seems difficult to improve the situation within the existing population.

The cavalier is a wonderful toy breed, and potentially an excellent companion dog for families looking for a sporty pet. Through traditional breeding plans during the last



ten years, the improvement in the disease situation is questionable. Therefore, the Norwegian Kennel Club proposes that the FCI and the Kennel Club and their scientific representatives evaluate the present situation, and if an outcross project with another breed is necessary to improve the health status and genetic situation in the breed. Your opinion in this matter will be of great importance for the future health and welfare in the cavalier breed.

The Norwegian Cavalier Club is informed about this initiative.

This letter is sent to the FCI, as well as to the Kennel Club (UK, the country of origin for the cavalier breed).

Yours Sincerely

For the Board of Directors, the Norwegian Kennel Club



Trine Hage
CEO



Kristin Wear Prestrud, DVM, PhD
Scientific director, Head of health department