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Dirsko J.F. von Pfeil, Dr.med.vet, DVM, DAVCS, DECVS, Bryden J. Stanley, BVMS, MVetSc, DACVS

CONGENITAL LARYNGEAL PARALYSIS IN ALASKAN HUSKIES

Congenital laryngeal paralysis is when a pup has dysfunction of the nerves which control opening and closing of the larynx (voicebox). In affected animals, the upper airway fails to open adequately during inhalation. The term ‘congenital’ refers to a disorder that is present at birth.

Signs: Pups are frequently called “**wheezers**” because of the typical sound of their breathing. They are intolerant of any marked exertion and may also have swallowing or regurgitation issues. Severely affected wheezers are reported to “run about 100 yards, then collapse, gasping and turning blue”.

Reported breeds: Bouvier des Flandres, Siberian Huskies and crossbreeds, Bull Terriers, and white-coated German Shepherd dogs. Additionally, Dalmations, Rottweilers, Pyrenean Mountain and Leonberger dogs have been seen with congenital laryngeal paralysis associated with other neurologic signs. Some of these disorders have been shown to be inherited (transmitted from one or both parents).

Age affected: Puppy or juvenile. **It is suspected this syndrome is an inherited condition in the Alaskan Husky.**

Common traits: Blue eyes, black and white or white hair coat, especially on the face; “freckles”; hard oral mucosal tags.



Outcome: Apparently some wheezers compensate and show improvement as they age. The reason for this cannot currently be explained. Even some Iditarod finishers reportedly have been wheezers as puppies. Conversely, some affected puppies require surgery to survive. Surgical treatment is recommended in severe cases and usually provides immediate and long-term improved quality of life.



View of the laryngeal inlet in a dog. Normal movement of the laryngeal inlet while breathing is depicted by the white arrows and black dotted line. In the wheezers, there is no such movement.



View of the laryngeal inlet after “Laryngeal Tieback”, a surgery to open the airway in severely affected wheezers. Note the opened airway in comparison with the figure to the left.



WHEEZER DISEASE IN AK HUSKIES

IS THIS SYNDROME INHERITED OR NOT?



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We are currently collecting pedigrees and blood samples for DNA testing from “Wheezers”. Musher owners with affected dogs are encouraged to contact Dr. von Pfeil, Dr. Stanley or Michele Fritz (Study Coordinator) at: wheez@cvm.msu.edu. (More contact information below).

Alternatively, you can contact your regular veterinarian if interested in participating.

“WHEEZER” STUDY DETAILS

Goals:

- 1) Determine the incidence of congenital laryngeal paralysis in the Alaskan Husky.
- 2) Describe the presentation, clinical signs, progression and outcome of the disorder in detail.
- 3) Perform genetic testing (by blood test) on affected and normal dogs to identify genetic cause.
- 4) Perform pedigree analysis on affected dogs.

At this time, even if clinically normal later in life, wheezers should not be used for breeding. It is recommended that affected dogs be neutered in an effort to prevent passing the disease to their offspring. If this disease is shown to be inherited, selective breeding could eliminate the disease from the gene pool.

Owner Involvement: Consent to collect a pedigree and blood sample from your dog. There are no costs associated with study participation.

Thank you for your cooperation!
Dirsko J.F. von Pfeil, Bryden J. Stanley, Michele C. Fritz

Additional Contact Information:

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Complete information below and fax to: **517-432-9904** Attn: Michele Fritz RE: **WHEEZER STUDY**

Owner Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Dog Name: _____ Birth date: _____

Sex: Male Female Neutered / Spayed

Breeder Name: _____ City / State: _____

Your Dog’s clinical signs: _____

PLEASE MARK ONE:

YES, I am interested in finding out more about enrolling my dog into the “Wheezers” study

YES, I have an available pedigree NO, I do not have a pedigree available