1st American Spaniel Club Foundation “Fun Day” Eye/DNA Clinic & Ice Cream Social a Success

By Debi Lampert-Rudman, Topaz Cockers
ASCP “Fun Day” Chair

“I am delighted by what I saw here today. So many of the cockers presented to me today are ones I don’t normally see at a clinic. I was delighted with the variety of ages and whole families who came with so much depth and information. It was wonderful.”
– Dr. Gustavo Aguirre, following clinic

West Trenton, NJ - 107 Cocker Spaniels, from 6 months to 16 years old, hailing from all along the East Coast: New Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Maryland, Delaware, Long Island, upstate New York and as far as 7 hours away, spent a gorgeous, sunny Sunday, April 28, 2013, enjoying each other’s company, eating delicious Halo Farms ice cream with fixings & Frosty Paws, winning hourly door prizes including a $400 gift card donated by ASC member Elena Duggan of Virginia, and contributing major benefits to the future health of Cocker Spaniels at the American Spaniel Club Foundation’s 1st “Fun Day” Eye/DNA Clinic & Ice Cream Social to find a DNA Marker for Cataracts with Dr. Gustavo Aguirre at West Trenton Animal Hospital, West Trenton, NJ.

A total of 126 dogs of various breeds attended the Eye/DNA clinic with Dr Gustavo Aguirre, VMD, PhD, PhD (hc), world-renowned veterinary ophthalmologist and gene-therapy researcher at the School of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania at the West Trenton Animal Hospital, 568 Grand Avenue, West Trenton, NJ http://www.westtrentonanimalhospital.com/.

HOW THE CLINIC ORIGINATED & RAN
Organized by Debi Lampert-Rudman, Topaz Cockers, New Jersey, under the guidance of American Spaniel Club Foundation President Dee Torgeson-Khisny, Dr. Aguirre was contacted, a date confirmed, and a flyer circulated and posted throughout local media, ASC Bulletin, Cocker Classic, ACN Magazine, Match Show Bulletin, Facebook, etc, for pre-registration.

In their confirmation emails, all attendees were instructed to bring a 5-generation pedigree, a special Cataract Research Form provided by Optigen President Sue Pearce-Kelling, copies of previous eye exams that could be left with Dr Aguirre, enclosed in a large plastic baggie.

Upon arrival, owners were given an OFA eye exam paper to be completed and the time their eye drops were given were written on the upper right hand corner. At least 25 minutes had to elapse before exams would take place. The “down time” was filled with ice cream, door prizes, and friendly chat in the very comfortable waiting area in front of the fireplace.

Once the dogs’ eyes were examined, they were ushered to the blood draw rooms – Richard Rudman was seated in the hallway directing dogs between the rooms. Two exams rooms were set up with two veterinary technicians in each. Once the blood was drawn, it was labeled and enclosed in a smaller baggie, placed inside the larger baggie with paperwork, and whisked off to the lab’s refrigerator. By day’s end, two large refrigerated coolers were filled with DNA samples, pedigrees, and forms ready for FedEx shipment on Monday to Optigen to begin research.

When we registered our clinic with OFA, they provided dated $7.50 discount stickers for all those who wished to have the eye papers listed on the www.OFA.org website. Normally OFA listings for eye exams are $12.00 each.

“We know how expensive it is to drive to a health clinic
and then participate, even though costs for the eye exams were kept very low at $25 each and the blood draw is free, but hope the prizes helped lessen some of that burden as we work together to eliminate cataracts in cockers. Also, we have hopes that it will help in the fight against cataracts in humans as well," Ms. Lampert-Rudman added.

Only Cocker Spaniels participated in the DNA research and free blood draw, however, other breeds were invited to offset costs. A Leonberger, some poodles and shelties, a Mi-Ki, Havanese, English Springer Spaniels, Samoyeds, Dobermans, and Tibetan Terrier rounded out the “friends and families” that helped make the day financially successful.

Assisting at check-in and with eye dropping the dogs were volunteers Jessica Brickett Legath, Barbara Brickett, Rachael DeSanto of Pennsylvania. Jessica Legath also stickered the backs of eye papers with OFA discount stickers as attendees left. Barb Hart of Holland, PA handled all entry tickets and raffle check ins as people arrived. Assisting with donations of the ice cream fixings and photography throughout the afternoon were Lisa Gaertner and Jackie Mackouy of New Jersey.

American Spaniel Club Foundation http://www.ascf.org/ and various door prize donors, including Angel Paws Pet Parlor, Hopewell, NJ angelpawsparlor.net, Freezy Pups of California https://freezypupscom/, and others kept additional costs to a minimum.

NO COSTS TO ASC OR ASCF FOR RESEARCH CLINIC

In fact, the entire clinic, as of this writing, cost ASC/ASCF nothing due to $25 payments by each attendee, generous donations from a variety of sources, and low costs for Dr. Aguirre’s fees. The DNA marker research is being conducted by Optigen http://www.optigen.com/opf9_about.html at no charge to ASCF and with possible donations from a grant being sought from the University of Michigan by Dr. Aguirre.

Thanks largely to the generous donations of the West Trenton Animal Hospital facility and staff, this wonderful health clinic was a remarkable success and enjoyable day. The veterinarians and vet techs led by Dr. John J. Kazmierczak, DVM, Dr. Jason Wilson, DVM, West Trenton Animal Hospital Manager Christine Rachwal, Victoria Brown, Vetcor Regional Manager, and Veterinary Techs Heather Sherotski, Eileen Oehrlein, Pam Aker, Ian Foules, Tanya Kushnirchuk assisted with check-in’s, held all dogs for eye exams, and performed all DNA blood draws and generally kept things on a top professional and pleasant path. In addition, West Trenton Animal Hospital generously donated all blood vials, packaged the blood for shipping, and closed its entire facility (which is usually open ½ day) for the Sunday event.

DR AGUIRRE’S FINDINGS & WHAT’S NEXT

Following the clinic, Dr. Aguirre discussed some of his initial findings and said that he had about half as many samples as he believed he would need for complete research to find a DNA marker for cataracts in Cocker Spaniels.

“I am delighted by what I saw here today,” Dr. Aguirre said, “So many of the cockers presented to me today are those I don’t normally see at a clinic. I was delighted with the variety of ages and whole families who come with so much detail and information. It was wonderful.”

continued on page 14