

consistent with the H&G's observations of increasing contacts from GRCA members and breeders regarding this disease.

Importance of Early Detection

Many ophthalmologists believe that early detection provides the best opportunity for effective treatment. However, signs of pigmentary uveitis are often subtle and may be confused with less serious conditions such as conjunctivitis. Affected eyes may be reddened or there may be a mild discharge, but in many cases there are no outward signs of disease in its earliest and potentially most treatable stages. Therefore, many veterinary ophthalmologists now feel that every Golden Retriever should have a yearly eye examination by an ophthalmologist, even in the absence of symptoms. These exams should begin prior to breeding for breeding dogs, but pet owners may wish to begin these yearly exams at about 3-5 years of age. This is because even though pigmentary uveitis is more common among older dogs, it certainly does affect younger dogs too. In fact, CERF data from 2008 thru 2011 show that *most* cases were diagnosed prior to 10 years old, with 323 dogs in that age range diagnosed. And while this represented only 1.2% of dogs under 10 that were examined, that is still a lot of dogs whose prognosis may have improved due to early diagnosis. Finally, owners should be aware that unexplained tearing or redness of the eye can be a sign of pigmentary uveitis, and that a timely examination by a veterinary ophthalmologist may lead to diagnosis and initiation of therapy that is believed to provide the greatest chance for preserving vision.

Breeding Considerations

Because pigmentary uveitis often develops after the prime reproductive years, it is difficult to control in breeding programs. Further, we do not yet understand the mode of inheritance, so the most prudent breeding strategy is to minimize the genetic contribution of affected dogs and their close relatives. For current breeders, this involves diligent investigation into the results of eye examinations of direct ancestors and their siblings in old age. This also means that owners of Goldens that have been bred in the past should continue eye examinations throughout the dog's lifetime so that their status is known. (These exams are part of the GRCA Code of Ethics.) Normal results recorded in a searchable online database, usually CERF or OFA (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals), ensure that data is available to all subsequent generations (CERF <http://www.vmdb.org/verify.html> and OFA <http://offa.org/>). Owners are also encouraged to submit and release abnormal data (affected dogs) to OFA's open database at no charge, or to CERF's open database for a nominal fee.

In addition, the H&G strongly recommends that all ophthalmology examinations (other than perhaps for trauma) include a CERF or OFA report. If the dog has genetic eye disease and is ineligible for a CERF or OFA number, the owner does not need to submit the owner copy (unless they wish to release the information into the open database) because the ophthalmologist will submit the CERF or OFA copy. Neither CERF nor OFA disclose the identity of affected dogs, but these reports allow us to track the frequency of eye disease in Goldens. This aggregate information helps us better understand how eye diseases impact the breed, may help us become