

Dear Friends and potential puppy buyers of Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retrievers,

On the occasion of a recent newscast on the program "Stern TV", which reported on Tollers, we would like to give some further information regarding the claims that were made.

Since 1996, Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retrievers have successfully been bred in the German Retriever Club (Deutscher Retriever Club, hereinafter called "DRC"), which was founded in 1963. As of November 2010, there are 26 registered kennels and 30 stud dogs listed with the club.

In late 2008, the German Kennel Club (Verband für das deutsche Hundewesen, hereinafter called VDH) granted preliminary recognition to Toller Club of Germany (Toller Club Deutschland, hereinafter called TCD e.V.). As of November 2010, there are 8 kennels and 4 stud dogs registered with the TCD e.V., thus making it the smallest and youngest Toller club worldwide. Shortly after the recognition of the TCD e.V., its executive board declared that, due to a high degree of inbreeding, Tollers are highly affected by illnesses and will become extinct in the foreseeable future. The only way out would be to outcross to another breed.

To date, the VDH has not given permission to realize these outcrossing plans which were proposed in January 2010 for the first time. There has been no international support for a project of this kind and the breed's country of origin, Canada, strongly objects to such plans. Subsequently, the executive board of the TCD e.V. published their plans in various media outlets. Statements made in the media disturbed many Toller friends.

With this statement, we, the DRC Toller breeders (having bred around 500 Tollers as of fall 2010), would like to share our information with you:

#### **How's the health situation in the Toller breed?**

On the whole, the Toller breed is healthy and robust. Most Tollers reach the ages of 10-15 years, but many dogs even grow older than that. Tollers, which were originally bred for hunting in harsh conditions, are an athletic breed, don't mind bad weather and often remain highly active even at an old age.

Many illnesses that plague other breeds are not present or very rare in Tollers. But, like others breeds, Tollers do have predispositions for some illnesses and are affected by them more often when compared to other breeds. Within the DRC, we are conducting thorough controls regarding the health of our breeding stock and its progeny.

To give you an example, we have analyzed the data from 2004-2008, which include 35 litters. This is a total of 218 puppies, of which 214 could be raised, 4 were not viable.

- Almost 80% of these puppies were screened for degenerative joint diseases, consisting of the following detailed results:

Hip dysplasia: 53.2 % "HD-A" (clear), 39.2% "HD B" (fair), 5.8% "HD C" (mild), 1.8% "HD D" (moderate). Thus, **98.2%** could be bred under the DRC's Code of Ethics.

Elbow dysplasia: 5 dogs (2.3% of all dogs screened for ED) were graded with „fair“ or grade I dysplasia, all other Tollers (=97.7%) were clear.

#### **This means that our Tollers have very healthy joints!**

- Reliable genetic tests allow us to prevent certain types of eye diseases.
- Only 5% of the Tollers bred between 2004 and 2008 were affected by a juvenile autoimmune disease (e.g. SRMA). This means that the other **95% did not have this disease**.

🚫 *No grown-up dog which died during those years died of autoimmune diseases. Like most canines, many adult Tollers died because of various kinds of cancer. A majority of these cancers were diagnosed in older dogs.*

We, the DRC Toller breeders, keep a close and critical eye on the development of the breed. Candor and active communication ensure that we are able to react quickly and appropriately to problems that arise within the breed.

We participate actively in the development of genetic tests, hoping that these will allow us minimize or even avoid the risk of those rare autoimmune diseases. Contrary to the very isolated approach the TCD e.V. has taken, we rely on international cooperation and on an in-depth exchange of information with other Toller breed clubs, especially the Canadian breed club. We deem international cooperation the necessary and right way to objectively judge the status of our breed and to take possible steps to improve our breed.

You can be certain that any DRC breeder will inform you thoroughly about illnesses and answer any questions you may have about your Toller's health.

### **How about the status of inbreeding within Tollers?**

We, the DRC Toller breeders put great emphasis on choosing the right breeding stock and strive for diversity within the breed. We are very well aware of the small gene pool of our breed, but do not shy away from substantial traveling expenses to find the best suited stud dog.

- ☐ The 35 litters, which whelped from 2004-2008 were fathered by 31 stud dogs, thus ensuring far more diversity than usually present in other breeds.
- ☐ The stud dogs used lived in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.
- ☐ Calculated for six generations, the **coefficient of inbreeding (COI)** ranged from 0% (for 13 of these litters) to 4.88%. Calculated for ten generations, the COI ranged from 3.72% to 16.31%, with 19 litters having COIs of under 10%.

When the coefficient of inbreeding is calculated by including all dogs that were used to "build" a breed like the TCD e.V. does, the COI is naturally going to be very high in any dog breed. Yet, any results can only be as good as the data used to produce it. Pedigree analysis that include the roots of a breed often have a higher margin of error as not all pedigrees written in the early years are accurate and do not show to which degree early breeders conducted outcrosses to other breeds. The DRC has never been contacted to have its data included in the study. The TCD e.V. bases its depiction of the "dramatic genetic depletion" in Tollers on a study by Dr. Mäki. Her theory that Tollers show too little genetic diversity was drawn from pedigree analysis and supported by the description of a limited number of DLA haplotypes. The number of haplotypes Mäki refers to is no longer the status of current scientific research; newer findings suggest a greater genetic variety within the breed.

Starting January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, all DRC breeders will be required to send blood samples of their breeding stock for permanent storage with the company Generatio. DNA extracted from these samples might, among other purposes, be used to determine the range of DLA haplotypes within the German Toller population. Our breeding decisions are made by incorporating the newest scientific research, which allows us to adapt the measures we take quickly, yet with due deliberation and consideration.

**Experienced Toller Breeders worldwide and population geneticists with insight into Tollers currently do not see the need to outcross Tollers to another breed, but warn about outcrossing projects because of the risks and insecurities involved in such measures.**

**We cannot comprehend the extremely negative depiction the TCD e.V. currently employs despite the fact that there still are litters being whelped under the auspices of the TCD e.V.**

The statements by the executive board of the TCD e.V. are frowned upon internationally.

We, the breeders within the DRC, will continue to keep a critical eye on our breed and its quality. We feel that you, as potential Toller owners have the right to obtain a Toller puppy that was bred adhering to the breed standard in all aspects (typical breed character, appearance and skills) while not ignoring health issues. We welcome all your questions.

Yours sincerely,  
The community of DRC Toller breeders