PEDIGREE CHUMS – KC AND VETCOMPASS LINK UP DATA – from page 1

within certain breeds. The implications are potentially massive – all over the country, there are thousands of existing dogs. That is a lot of unused data, but by merging the databases that Information can be harnessd like never before.”

A KC spokesman added: “The KC is very pleased to be working with Vet Compass and Mr O’Neill to improve the understanding of canine health issues. By linking our database with Vet Compass, we hope to have a truer picture of the concerns for KC pedigreed dogs and how they compare to ‘pure-bred’ and ‘cross-bred’ dogs. This will help the KC and wider dog community to prioritise health issues and target education and policy appropriately to improve health for all dogs.”

“Endless possibilities”

David Williams is chief vice-principal at the RCVS and helped develop Vet Compass with RCVS colleagues David Brodribb in 2005. Since then, a growing body of research has been generated, including a recently published study looking at the prevalence of feline hyperthyroidism. Data analysed using computer-derived hypotheses show that rather than the condition being linked to iodine levels in soil or water, the disease is linked to hormone-generating genes carried in cross-bred cats that were found to be far more susceptible. Dr Williams said: “Rather than just doing hypothesis-driven research, we can now get computer-derived hypotheses because you can ask the computer to look at the data for any associations or non-associations. You can do this with co-vectors or cluster analysis and it will spit back a bunch of stuff at you.”

“One of the perfect cases of this is when we looked at 2,700 hyperthyroid cats from first opinion practices. What was interesting was the distribution of hyperthyroid cats in the UK compared to the distribution of the cat population in the UK. There are not areas where it is more likely to occur than others, which makes some of the previously reported ideas about why hyperthyroidism might occur because of changes in iodine levels in the water or the soil much less likely. Interestingly, pure breed cats are very unlikely to develop hyper-thyroidism. We can take that information and look for variation in the thyroid hormone-generating genes in the pure breed and see if there are any differences to the cross-bred cats to see what is going on. Without sounding info, the possibilities are endless.”

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