

Dog Show Disease

We have identified a new disease, probably caused by a virus among dog owning people. It apparently has been in existence for a considerable time, but only recently has anyone identified this disease, and begun to study it.

Epidemiologists here have identified three stages of this disease and typical symptoms, and they are:

A. You have the early symptoms (Stage I) if:

1. You think that any show within 300 miles is nearby.
2. You begin to enjoy getting up at 5 a.m. in the morning to walk and feed dogs.
3. It is fun to spend several hours a day grooming dogs.
4. You think you're being frugal if you spend less than \$3,000 a year on shows.
5. You can't remember what it was like to have just one dog.

B. You definitely have the disease (Stage II) if:

1. Your most important factor when buying a car is how many crates you can fit in it.
2. When you look for a house, the first thing you think of is how many dogs you can kennel on the property.
3. Your dog food bill is higher than your family's.
4. You spend as much on veterinarians as on doctors.
5. You have no money because of showing dogs.
6. You have to buy more than one vehicle a year, because you keep burning out the year or 70,000-mile warranty going to shows.
7. You buy a small RV. discover it's not quite big enough...and buy another before the first is paid for)
8. You have more pictures of the dogs than of your family.
9. Your idea of a fun vacation is to hit a show circuit.
10. Most of your conversations revolve around the dogs.

C. You are a terminal case (Stage III) if:

1. You wake up in the morning and find out that you put the kids in the crates and the dogs in the beds last night.

2. You know each dog's name and pedigree, but can't figure out who that stranger in the house is; it turns out to be your husband/wife.
3. Your neighbors keep insisting that those kids running around your house bothering the dogs are yours.
4. You keep telling the kids to "heel" and can't understand why they won't, and why they keep objecting to the choke collar.
5. You cash in the kid's college trust fund to campaign the dogs.
6. You've been on the road showing dogs so long that you can't remember where you live.
7. Your family tells you "It's either the dogs or us"; you choose the dogs.

Do you have this dreaded disease? Well, there is hope. In the course of our research, we have found that most cases seem to stop at Stage II, and remain chronic. We, with great difficulty, managed to acquire several Stage III ACOS patients. They are currently in our isolation wards, where we are studying them to gain a better understanding of this disease. It is a sad sight, seeing these formerly vibrant people as they shuffle around their rooms in endless triangle or L-patterns, making odd hand motions (as if holding a lead and baiting a dog), and making chirping noises.

Merely saying the word "Crufts" can send them into an uncontrollable frenzy.

Unfortunately, there isn't much hope for these cases, but with time and research to further understand this disease; we hope to come up with a cure. We are now attempting to isolate the causative agent, and may be able to develop a vaccine in the future.

An interesting sidelight of this disease seems to be that exposure at an early age has an immunizing effect. Several people afflicted with ACOS at Stage II and Stage III have close family members (children, husbands, wives) who have absolutely no disease. It is thought by some of our researchers that this may be due to environmental effects, to an aggregated immune function, or to the fact that those at these stages of the disease tend not to associate with their close family members possibly due to the memory deficit induced by the disease - that is, in that they don't remember that they have close family members!

What can you do to prevent this disease? Until a cure is found, prevention is the measure.