

International Breeding Recommendations

Icelandic Sheepdog International Cooperation – ISIC

The Icelandic Sheepdog International Cooperation (ISIC) started in Bjuv, Sweden 1996. The reason was that the Icelandic Sheepdog needed an increase of genetic variation. To be able to reach this goal, the Icelandic Kennel Club, HRFÍ, meant that an international perspective was necessary. The national breed clubs within ISIC have decided, step by step, at the ISIC seminars about common strategies for this purpose. This is a way to gather all such strategies and recommendations.

The International Breeding Recommendations are based up on recommendations given by geneticist Per-Erik Sundgren (Sweden) and biologist Pieter Oliehoek (the Netherlands) at the International Breeding Meeting in Uppsala- Sweden (2000) and P.E. Sundgrens lecture “Analysis of breeding with Icelandic Sheepdogs at the 11th Seminar at Solröd Strand-Denmark 2006.

The aim of the Breeding Committees in ISIC is to support breeding with healthy dogs with good working ability and the typical behaviour of a farm and herding spits. It is based on the specific type and mental characteristics of the breed described in the breed standard of the Icelandic Sheepdog.

Healthy dogs means dogs perceived as healthy and strong, in good condition and with thick, weatherproof coat. It also means dogs that fulfil club recommendations in health matters.

A dog of good type means dog with good external characteristics. The concept ” type ” involves the total sum of the physical details which clearly separates the Icelandic sheepdog from any other breed. The general appearance and the details are described in the Icelandic Sheepdog Breed Standard.

The Breeding Committees will support breeding with lively, gentle, courageous, intelligent and happy dogs. The Icelandic Sheepdog should be a very good herding dog and an excellent guarding dog without being aggressive.

The Breeding Committee Task

The national Breeding Committees task is to collect restructure and prepare information for breeding. Such preparation concerns working ability (herding and guarding), mentality, health and exterior as for example announcing official HD- status, ED-status, ophthalmoscopic examinations, Mentality Descriptions (MH), no. of puppies, no. of litters, males and bitches used in breeding, level of inbreeding, population analysis etc.

The Breeding Committees main task is to recommend breeding for long-term results. The recommendations are always based on the national kennel clubs’ and the breed clubs’ general breeding policy.

The Breeding Committees will recommend combining dogs from the unusual family groups with dogs from the more common groups. This is to ensure preservation/spreading of “unusual genes” to a sufficient number of dogs.

The Breeding Committees recommend selecting harder in the big family groups and not being too selective in the smaller ones. When selecting from the smaller families it is always necessary to choose healthy dogs and also the best ones.

Breeding advisory is based on common advisory worked out by the Breeding Committees total knowledge about the Icelandic Sheepdog in the international cooperation (ISIC). Each national Breeding Committee is responsible for the official information to the breeders in its country.

To gather data from different countries into an international database within the cooperation is basic and necessary for the future. The gathered data constitute an invaluable source of information for all breeders of the breed within ISIC.

Breeding Recommendations

Genetic variation

ISIC recommend keeping a wide breeding base and to increase the genetic variation. To keep the level of Effective Population Size we need at least 20 males and about 3-5 females per male (60-100 females) in breeding at the same time.

The ISIC goal is to reach an Effective Population Size about 150-200 dogs for the total population within ISIC which is large enough to stop heavy losses of genetic variation.

ISIC strongly recommends the exchange of breeding animals between countries in such a way that the average inbreeding, calculated over five generations, will not increase more than 2,0-2,5% (level of inbreeding). This corresponds to 0,4-0,5% increase per generation which in turn corresponds to an effective population size of 100-125.

It is not consistent according to new breeding rules to mate full sibs or parent to progeny with each other.

ISIC recommend keeping the average generation interval about 5 years.

The generation interval is the average of the parents at the birth of the offspring later used in breeding. The average generation interval influences how quickly a breed loses its genetic variation due to inbreeding for instance when too few males are used for breeding. If the average generation interval is shorter than five years, the recommendation is to lower the total numbers of progenies after a single male. Too strong selection and rapid generation turnover may cause a serious threat to the health and viability of the breed.

ISIC general recommendations in small populations is that a single male should never produce more than 5% of the puppies produced during the years he is active as a breeding male. With a period of use of about five years these 5% of the puppies correspond to 25% of all puppies produced in a normal year.

In a long run this would not be enough. The ambition should be to keep the number of progenies below 2% of all progenies produced in the breed during a period comparable to the generation interval of the breed.

ISIC recommends that the number of progenies after a single male should not be more than 35 and no more than twice that number as grandfather.

ISIC recommend that the numbers of progenies after a single bitch should not be more than 25. If a bitch gets two litters within a period of 12 months the bitch should be given a rest for at least 12 months before the next litter.

For high quality breeding it is important to include as complete information as possible about the individuals selected for breeding. Dogs are not mature until 2-3 years of age and from a show exhibition point a dog cannot be judged with certainty before that time. ISIC recommends avoiding mating with individuals (both males and the bitches) less than 24 month of age. This is especially important if the breed is suffering from genetic disturbances that do not show up until the dog has grown up.

Health

ISIC recommends that dogs used in breeding should have an official known HD-status. The use of D and E hipped dogs for breeding is not recommended. The cooperation countries recommend adjusting their earliest age of x-raying to twenty (20) months.

The recommendation is that all dogs used in breeding should have an official known eye-examination. For dogs used in breeding the cooperation countries ISIC recommends that the result should be without remarks.

To not disqualify dogs with not known hereditary cataract or not known hereditary retinopati from breeding ISIC recommend dogs with the remark "Probably not hereditary" as OK for breeding.

It is important to know if a dog is able to mate in a "natural" way. For breeding ISIC only recommends that only dogs which can mate in a natural way are used. If artificial insemination (AI) is used it is the responsible AI-veterinarian who should certify that the male and the bitch can mate naturally.

ISIC recommends the Breeding Committees in each country to inform about cryptorchism cases and we ask all countries to do regularly researches about the situation.

Mentality

ISIC recommend that dogs used in breeding should have taken part in the Mental Description (MH) if possible. To avoid further problems with mental status it is thus recommended that we keep an eye on the dogs' mentality so we can use the description in the selection of breeding animals.

Working ability

A herding disposition description is needed to get knowledge about the Icelandic Sheepdogs working ability.

**Decision taken at The International Seminar
Copenhagen, October the 28th 2007
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