

Introducing the

ABCA HEALTH & EDUCATION FOUNDATION, INC.

On June 15, 2015 the American Border Collie Association's Board of Directors voted to set up a non-profit, tax-exempt foundation to enhance its services to Border Collies, their owners, and the Border Collie breed.

The Purpose The foundation is intended to be the focal point for

(a) Border Collie genetic research -- In the past, ABCA has provided financial and other types of support to research projects aimed at genetic diseases affecting the Border Collie. In the future, the foundation will evaluate and award such grants. It will be better equipped to do so because as a §501(c)(3) charity, it can receive donations that will be tax-deductible to the donors, so it can draw on not only the amounts ABCA is able to contribute, but also on memorial gifts, bequests, corporate donations, proceeds from benefit trials, contributions from those particularly committed to a specific health issue, and the like. We hope it will attract advisers and volunteers from those with particular interest and expertise in health issues, and we also hope it will give us more clout to focus researchers on issues that are a high priority for our breed (e.g., Early Onset Deafness).

(b) evaluation and dissemination of health and genetic information -- It's important that the soundest and most up-to-date information about health issues and treatment options be made easily available to Border Collie owners and breeders. This will be one of the educational functions of the foundation.

(c) provision of other more general information about border collies -- One of the services most frequently requested by ABCA members is help for livestock producers in learning how to obtain, train, and utilize working dogs. This would be one example of the type of general education the foundation could provide, by enlisting those who are interested in and able to furnish this valuable assistance.

What We've Done So Far The foundation was incorporated as of July 28, 2015, and was recently granted §501(c)(3) tax-exempt status by the IRS, retroactive to the date of incorporation. ByLaws have been adopted. We've obtained a website domain -- bordercolliefoundation.org -- which can be accessed now, but which we hope to develop into real usefulness as soon as possible. The ABCA Board appointed five initial directors (Eileen Stein, Mark Billadeau, Warren Mick, Mike Neary and Denise Wall) to serve until a larger and more geographically diverse Board can be chosen. The ABCA Board also committed to contribute \$25,000 per year for the next four years to help get the foundation on a firm footing.

What We Plan to Do One of the foundation's first priorities will be to try to get the search for an Early Onset Deafness (EOD) genetic test up and running again. That test appeared to be almost in our grasp five years ago, but EOD research has been stalled since then. We hope to get the research going again by providing the money and DNA samples that are needed to take the final steps.

Even more fundamental, the foundation is researching the best method for setting up a Border Collie DNA bank. From the point of view of researchers, a comprehensive DNA bank would provide the raw material needed to investigate pretty much any genetic diseases. From the point of view of Border Collie owners who would be contributing the DNA, a DNA bank would mean that you could provide DNA **once** for a dog, and it would be retained for use in future worthwhile research projects, rather than being repeatedly solicited for DNA every time a new project comes along.

How You Can Help Back in 2011, when the ABCA surveyed the membership for their views about setting up a health and education foundation, more than three times as many of the responding members favored the proposal as opposed it. And in a 2010 survey, members rated "health/genetic research" as the area it was most important for the ABCA to support, even above support for the sheepdog finals, with "promotion/education for farmers/ranchers" rated third. But soon we will find out how much interest and support there truly is for health and education.

We are not asking for your monetary support now, although there will come a time when we will (not so much for large donations, but for small ones that will show widespread support). We're asking if you'd like to be involved with the foundation. Do you have a particular interest in Border Collie health and education matters in general, or in a particular issue? Do you have expertise in genetics, veterinary medicine, science in general? How about website design and maintenance, fundraising, organizing and setting up systems, accounting/bookkeeping, researching, writing or editing articles? If so, or if you have any ideas you'd like to see considered, please email one of the following, telling a little about your background and interests:

Eileen Stein <eileen@bordercollie.org>
Mark Billadeau <markb_pdf@yahoo.com>
Warren Mick <wmick@nycap.rr.com>

Even if you just want to express general encouragement, please send your email address to Eileen, so we can keep you informed as we go along. We hope that with your support the foundation will enable us to take a big step forward on behalf of our dogs.