FB 42. I have had a potential breakthrough for attempts to find the gene for JKD. I have a Cambridge genetics professor now on board who understands the weaknesses of the GWAS systems that have been applied to JKD so far and to such dog problems generally. These problems include the high levels and the non-randomness of dog breeding. He is proposing a different approach which rings all the bells for me. He will use a more variable different type of marker to screen each chromosome arm and also regions of potential interest, rather than the huge general blanket SNP approach with hundreds of thousands of markers that look for possible associations with the disease; and rather than using carefully selected controls, hoped to be free of the gene, he wishes to sample a very large group of dogs taken almost randomly to represent the whole breed (in the UK) and which can then also allow counterbalance the low penetrance that typifies JKD. And of course, any new cases of JKD, and parents and sibs are dearly needed too. It all makes sense to me. The method has a good expectation of success, and it has already been proven to work. Funding is being sought from the Kennel Club which has already expressed interest.

My task will therefore be to sample as widely across the breed as possible – at championship shows, open/limit shows, club matches and, as possible, also the non-show population. Because of the numbers of dogs and the range of places of collection, blood samples will not be an option. Rather, with this type of work requiring only limited amounts of DNA, samples will be limited to oral swabs. But I will need every kind of help for this as the aim is to get many hundreds of samples representing the whole breed, the show and pet population.

MI am seeking support from all Clubs to help with this – to collect samples from shows of all levels, matches, and of course home dogs. I hope to go to some shows down south over the coming weeks and hand out swabs and instructions. My Cambridge colleague and student will also attend to collect from some shows. There is a lot of enthusiasm.

As far as I am concerned, this is it! If this methodology does not locate the gene, we have a big problem. So, can your club help. If so, please let me know as soon as possible and I’ll provide details and swab kits as needed.