

A trembling story

I have finally, after almost three years, seen a dream come through. 20th May 2012 he arrived to our family. A Barbet – black with white signs and the most gorgeous male puppy of nine weeks. We had a great puppytime – as for most puppyowner, shoes in pieces, stolen food, chewed magazines, pee on the best carpet...and the most adorable and innocent look of a puppy so full of life. We went to puppycourse to start his training and exhibitions to socialize with other barbetpeople and just for fun since he is so young but most of all we just enjoyed each others company. He is healthy, most handsome, tousled and lively our Barbet Koi.

At the time he is 8 months old I got a letter from the swedish barbetclub (SBBK). It was in november and I will never forget that day. In this letter I am told that SBBK suspect that Koi has a neurological tremor that is hereditary, and they look very seriously at this. This was devastating – I haven't heard of this before, didn't know what it meant and became most upset. Then very sad and after that very, very afraid – thinking – is Koi having a servere disease? Will he die? The letter also tells that in one litter of a brother and in two litters of a sister there have been seen tremor amongst the puppies and in the female. Totally 8 out of 22 puppies and the female have showed tremor. SBBK also recommend not to breed on these dogs and be very cautious with the dogs that are related to these two siblings. The female is booked for a neurological examining in december at a vetclinic in Stockholm in search to find the cause of this tremor and after that SBBK will send a report to all now involved. And again said that it is of great concern not to breed on these dogs.

I immediately called my breeder and asked her. She said she knows no more about tremor than I but said that Kois brothers owner went to see a member of the breedcouncil of SBBK in another matter and this member have seen Kois brother trembling in his leg and she has also seen it on these puppies aunt. To the females owner SBBK said that this kind of tremor is related to epilepsy.

Koi and I met with his brother and owners in August 2012 for a brothermeeting. Kois brother was car-sick and I notice the same tremble with his brother as I have seen in Koi and asked his owners about it. But they said they have seen it but since he isn't affected and it disappears when he moves they doesn't bother. And that was the end of that... The two brothers were having a wonderful time playing together again for the first time since they were separated to move into their new families. I told my breeder that it was most perculiar either the owner of Kois brother nor SBBK have called me then they suspected such a thing since they knew Koi tremble as well. But she didnt know why. My breeder wondered why I haven't told her about Koi and his front leg tremble. But I told her I have never seen it as a problem just a natural reaction of his state of mind...so what is there to tell?

So still upset and sad I called my vet for a meeting. I went to the vet a few days later with Koi and my letter, having her to explain what this means for Koi and me. She sat down, read the letter and then continued with a healthcheck in Koi... asking me some ordinary questions about Koi and how he acts in daily life. I answered and was of course very anxious, almost trembling, to know the meaning in this letter. Relax, she said, and then she starts explaining that tremor means a rhythmic trembling or shaking in a bodypart or the whole body. Tremor is a symptom and not a disease. Tremor can be caused by various reasons – from natural to neurological. It is known in both humans and dogs so it is not specific for the Barbet. She asked me if I have seen this in Koi. Yes, I have! Not regularly but sometimes. Mostly when we goes by car, he hates it because he gets sick, and he tremble in one of his front legs. The leg has not his bodyweight but still in contact with the surface he's on. His frontleg trembles in a rhythmic way and sometimes I've seen it at puppycourse as well but I have not paid it any attention because it stops the minute he moves or regain the weight on the leg that is trembling or changes position. He is a young puppy, uncertain, anxious and excited. He is not bothered or looks like he is disturbed by it so I have just seen it as an natural behaviour. The vet explained that anxiety and excitement can be a reason for tremor. And tremor is absolutely not related to epilepsy! She tells me not



to worry and also that she can't start looking for faults in a dog that is as healthy and sound as Koi. She said we will wait for the exam results of the female in december. And from that continue our discussion in how and if to proceed with Koi. I also asked my vet about how SBBK can assume that it is hereditary? And she tells that they can't. One have to make sure what causes tremor to do that. A symptom is not hereditary. We left the vet – very glad and relieved, no longer in fear for Kois life and health.

But I was still upset about my club. So I wrote a long letter to SBBK to let them know how my reaction to their letter was and that I was most upset about how they dealt with this issue. I also told them that I have been written an even longer letter to the Swedish Kennel Club to let them know how SBBK been acting in this matter and asked them for advice. After about two weeks I got a call from SKK there they thanked me for the information and that they will talk to SBBK in this matter and advice and supervise all further information they distribute in this matter. They also told that SBBK should apologize to all now concerned for misleading information and having the owners upset about their dogs health and life.

A long wait began...almost three months until their report and apology arrived. This tremorreport were introduced by an apology from SBBK. Not an apology for acting wrong in any way instead it was an apology to those now concerned whom might felt they got into a scrape by SBBKs first letter and became worried over their dogs health.

The report shows the result of different exams. A general clinic exam, a neurological exam and a elektro-diagnostic exam and all those exams shows of a normal and healthy dog. The vet also said the female was in a very good condition, good muscles with good reflexes. So there is nothing at all to find in the exams so after that the vet starts to assume that it could be a postural tremor described as a orthostatic tremor in dogs but she is not sure since there are differences in how it shows in this female. She also tells that human tremor cant be compared with dogs tremor but still she ends the report by assuming it could be hereditary since essential tremor in humans are hereditary.

The vet also suggest an autopsy in one dog with tremor to examine the nervesystem and see if she can find an answer, but not even that is for certain since some tremor is idiopathic and that means it can't be determined what causes tremor. SBBK continue their report with a recommendation not to breed with dogs that have tremor and to be very careful with the ones that are close related to the dogs that have tremor. They point out that this group is now 15% of all swedish Barbets and they will not see an health-issue with tremor in the Barbet as a breed. *Does anyone?* They also point out the one litter in which Koi is born there none of the parents shows of any tremor but two of the puppies show tremor. *Maybe the tremble is caused by excitement or anxiety and therefor not is hereditary.* They also intend to follow all dogs in this group and after two years from now evaluate how this tremor has progressed over time. *Good!* And from that make a new recommendation in breeding.

A healthy female with normal results and with occasionally trembling back legs that is what we know for a fact. And the most important thing is that the dog is not disturbed by this tremble. Her quality of life is just the same as for dogs without tremor. The rest is a lot of assuming in one or the other direction. No more fact in that could cause this tremor. I know that there are a lot of different kinds of tremor and some shown with sickness, some without. There is localized tremor, just shown in a bodypart and there is general tremor, there all body trembles. In all dogs now mentioned, it is tremor in front or/and backlegs (localized tremor). This tremor shows occasionally a few times a week or less and in one dog daily and the owners consider their dogs healthy and the dogs dont seems to be disturbed. This tremble is mostly shown after work or in a state of excitement or anxiety. And the tremble stops as the dogs moves or changes position. And in Kois and his brothers case the tremor appears more seldom as they grow older. So these are the facts for real. I dont think we shall upset people to think that this is a serious disease when it is a symptom with a unknown cause! And in that light it is very sad if people starts spreading rumours that will become a serious threat for both the bloodline as for the breed itself.

So I wrote a new letter to show SBBK another way to look at this matter from a new perspective and discuss the facts we do know instead of assumptions. To shade off the meaning of tremor. Pointing out threats and damages that can hurt both dogs and their owners as well as the breed. Maybe even sterilization and castration can be an result of their breed recommendations taken out of presumptions. Puppybuyers and breeders maybe will avoid this bloodline completely. So I told them it is of great concern for both the dogs and the breed to share information and try to find more knowledge about this kind of tremor. It can take many doggenerations for science to find an answer to the cause, if they can, and during that time we can destroy a breed with a small population as the Barbet.

My main purpose in this discussion is; dont scare people – enlighten them and encourage them to share information! We have to broaden our outlook. Is it a healthproblem that some dogs tremble in their leg/legs when they are excited or anxious or just have been running a lot? Is it a healthissue when dogs not are disturbed by the tremble and it don't affects the dogs in their activities or daily life? How to look at this issue and compare it with other issues that we do know affect the dogs badly is very important. We have to keep in mind that how we chose to approach this issue also affects the breed if we start to reject a bloodline out of assumptions. Instead we must from knowledge and awareness take good decisions for both

our dogs and the breed. The importance of sharing information and how to present information based on facts just to avoid damage in both humans and dogs. Like I was upset and scared. This dialogue of mine I send to SBBK, the two breeders, their puppyowners and SKK for knowledge.

Some days ago I recieved a new mail there SBBK tells me it is no point discussing this matter any further since the recommendations are already made and if I would like to breed on Koi when it is up to me and the female owner to share that responsibility. It is OK even though SBBK don't agree since it is just a recommendation! Also referring to that their breedrecommendation are based upon SBBKs competence and with advice from SKK and supported from Barbetpeople abroad.

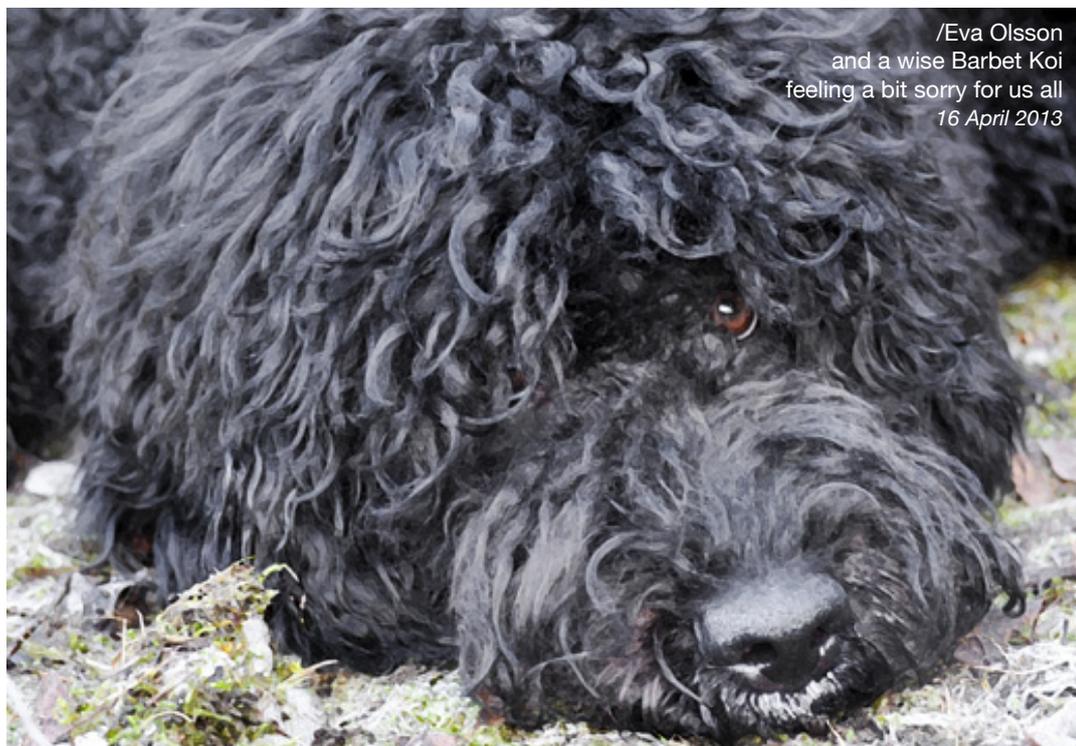
I was so taken by this answer...How can they assume that I was discussing Koi and his use in breeding? He is just a youngster, not even screened or in the right age or evaluated for qualities to breed on – he is far to young for all that! My dialogue and intention was to show something rather more serious than breeding on Koi. I have all along pointed out the importance of sharing knowledge and how to share it and put an end to presuming things! This is a burning question! And a specially for SBBK since it is them who advice and support breeders, dogowners and puppybuyers. Then it is very important to think of what to say and how, to mediate this issue.

Are they even trying to understand? My critics and dialogue was in care for all of us now concerned and for this bloodline as well as for the breed. Not a statement from my own point of view with Koi. I told them several times that we all have to deal with facts instead of what we think. What a narrow outlook! The real issue here is the importance of searching and sharing facts, objective information and knowledge and how to share it without assumptions to prevent rumours and damage.

Knowledge is superior recommendations. I think all of us, breeders, dogowners, puppiebuyers are fully capable to take the right decisions if we are provided with information, knowledge and experience based on facts. This means all of us have to take responsibility to be open and honest with sharing facts and aspecially for those who represent a club or an organization. And to accomplish that we have to inspire confidence and show respect in both ways to sustain reliability in each other.

So how to react on a answer like this? One can argue against ignorance but argue against foolishness is in vain. So this is my dead end of a trembling story.

I looked at Koi – A Barbet probably never been born if the recommendations of SBBK was taken when his mother were mated. This great, healthy and young Koi, totally unconcerned in this matter, who doesn't bothers a bit what people says or assumes about him – he just enjoys life – and that makes him the smarter one in this matter – a real wise Barbet – much wiser than mankind ever will become.



/Eva Olsson
and a wise Barbet Koi
feeling a bit sorry for us all
16 April 2013

*In case any of you know something regarding this kind of legtrampling
or have experience of your own I will be most glad to take part of that knowledge.
Just to learn more and to collect facts and experiences that I can share and mediate in a proper way.*

eva@agraffi.com