

I am proud of my dogs and appreciate all great active homes my owners provide for my Astra dogs, I love hearing the good and even value hearing the bad about my dogs, but I don't appreciate being accused of things I and my dogs have not done.

I believe that I have a right to reply to the accusations made against my dogs and my breeding practices.

I have been breeding for almost 30 years and know my lines inside out, but the nature of genetics will always throw up unknowns. I have no wish to breed dogs affected with any disease whatsoever, but nature cannot be totally controlled, I do what I can to keep learning and searching so that I can change my policies as and when new proven, peer reviewed, scientific information becomes available.

This is why in 2014, I started, and continue to run two dedicated Border collie health/breeding groups on Facebook?

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ISDSbordercolliehealth>

Another more technical group geared towards breeders.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/BreedingBorderCollies.intothefuture/>

Yes it is true that a very minute number of Astra Dogs, out of over 1200 in 30 years, have been afflicted with different types of epilepsy and this information is on various databases, mostly because I have owners who REPORT these things to me and then to the public, but this does not mean that my dogs are affected any worse than any other breeder.

Breeding is about the law of averages so everything should be taken in context, number of litters sired by one dog and/or produced out of a bitch (including the total number born). For a true picture, you should look at the total number of dogs bred by a single breeder versus the number of cases of epilepsy in those dogs bred.

**Epilepsy is considered a 5% risk in ALL breeds of dogs, in the Border collie this may be as high as 10%.**

From all the many dogs I have bred over a period of 30 years, the percentage of ASTRA pups affected with epilepsy is just 2% which includes one individual dog Astra Chum, who himself sired 3 fitters, without his influence the chance of an Astra dog fitting is **LESS THAN 1%**.

*This is way below the expected 5% rate for ALL breeds of dogs.*

It is a FACT that Epilepsy, HD, OCD etc, including common problems like undershot jaws, are being covered up by far too many breeders.

I do not cover up these things, that is why you will see reference to puppies born dead or died soon after birth, undershot jaws etc mentioned on my website, unfortunately these things happen and despite £1000's spent on laboratory fees we still do not know the cause of many of these deaths, but who knows; by putting these things on my website maybe some other breeder, who has had a similar problem will spot it, and get in touch hopefully they have been lucky enough to have found a reason and prevention/treatment, information shared is halfway to finding solutions.

If a sibling to your pup was affected with a disease, would you want to know and then worry for the rest of your dog's life, that your dog might also be affected **with a less than 2% chance?**

Some owners want this information so that they can worry over every little thing that affects their dog.

For me, the important time to advise you is when, by the advice of my vet and specialists, I may be able to help save your dog's life by early intervention, or very important, if you want to breed with your dog – this is already covered in my website and my emails to prospective owners.

Covering up health issues does nobody any favours, least of all the dogs.

Unfortunately too, the majority of breeders still do no health testing at all  
ISDS only enforce some CEA testing

Kennel Club does not enforce any health testing

It is extremely rare for breeders of unregistered dogs to health test and they rarely have any idea of pedigree and health issues behind their dogs.

I do ISDS registrations for all my pups,

I do DNA testing for CEA, TNS, IGS and Hip Score, eye test all older dogs 8 years and over,

I record instances of disease so that I know if there is a problem brewing in my breeding program.

I also take DNA sample from all my litters to send to Genetic Research for all diseases and defects, before they leave home at 8 weeks so that we can participate in ongoing research for Epilepsy and other diseases.

*Not one breeder nor even the owner, can know when Epilepsy or any other health problem will occur (unless the parents have been DNA tested for those testable conditions), it is what the owner and breeder do when a health problem occurs that counts the most.*

I no longer breed from my best most popular stud dog, nor in fact, do I have any of his progeny in my breeding program, because I follow, and often go beyond, the guidelines as given out by the experts for all diseases including epilepsy:-

- Never repeat a mating which produced an affected dog,

- NEVER use an affected dog for breeding,

- Remove from breeding any dog which has produced an epilepsy affected pup to more than one mate.

Until we find the gene and then the DNA test, we are restricted to working with the dogs and the knowledge of their health and that of their progeny, trying to use this information to avoid this horrible affliction by following the above guidance.

**To remove close relatives, carte blanche, from breeding will, by the warnings issued by qualified geneticist, cause much more problems because of the reduction of genetic diversity in our breed and thereby increasing the Coefficient of Inbreeding COI which in its self, will cause multiple horrific health problems and increase the incidence of Epilepsy still more.**

### **Some facts about Astra's and Epilepsy.**

Over 30 years, I have bred over 1200 puppies in litters averaging 8 in number, from multiple different bloodlines. This is an above average litter size for the breed, only achieved by good management.

Yes, "ASTRA" appears several times, and a couple of names who appear multiple times, in the UK fitting database simply because

1. I have great owners who want to be part of research and sharing of information,
2. Astra is my prefix which immediately identifies me as the breeder, unlike the breeders of other dogs without a prefix who cannot be easily traced to a breeder by reading the dog's name or number.

Two dogs in particular stand out.

**Astra Mars** who never directly sired a fitting pup in 150 puppies until he was 12 years old when he sired just one. The progeny of Astra Mars has been bred from all over the world and to my current knowledge very, very few of his children and grandchildren have produced epileptic pups.

**Astra Chum**, a Grandson of Astra Mars, sired in excess of 55 puppies, producing 3 affected pups born to three different bitches, making it around 6% chance that one of his pups got Epilepsy, so for this reason, despite the fact that he was only 5 years old at the time and the most popular, sort after, sire of my pups, I decided to stop breeding from him late in 2013, his last litter born was February 2014, which was unfortunately, conceived before I was notified that he was the grandsire of three fitting pups born in one litter which I did not breed, this information then helped to make up my

mind that the evidence against him was far too positive and that he was almost certainly a carrier for epilepsy.

Chum is NOT affected by epilepsy himself. I do not own any progeny or grandchildren etc. of Chum, who now has a lovely retirement home on a small holding with a young active family.

**Without culling all my dogs and starting with completely unknown breeding stock with unknown history – which fact alone would very obviously and suddenly increase the chances of an Astra being affected to the average 5% level (the known risk factor for all breeds), the dogs I am currently using in my breeding program, are to the best of my knowledge as clear from epilepsy as I can possibly ensure.**

#### What is the current understanding of epilepsy?

It is believed that in the Border collie, there is at least a 5 to 10% chance of any your dog being affected by epilepsy.

But we really do not know the truth.

Remember to take everything into context and perspective see the whole picture.

The fitting databases are a great thing, but ask yourself why there are so few dogs being reported, and why so few of those reported are ISDS reg. dogs?

The fact is that ISDS registers 6000 puppies every year, yet if there is just a 5% chance (all breeds) could be affected, then the sums say that around 300 (5%) ISDS registered puppies will be affected every single year.

#### **So why is it, that they are not reported?**

We hear of fitting dogs all the time but few go public with the information for fear of being ostracised and unable to find suitable homes for their puppies.

It is a fact that there are virtually no bloodlines in the Border collie which are free of epilepsy.

There are more than one of these databases around the world and what is clearly evident is that there are 100's of different lines that are affected and it is a complete lottery as to when it will rear its ugly head.

This will remain so until the Kennel Club and the ISDS act, preferably together, to ensure breeders start reporting to a central registration body and steps are then taken to ensure all breeders know about these cases to help reduce the spread in the future and to help in the research for the genes responsible.

As for my Guarantees on Health these are covered on this page and it is essential for an owner to provide as much information as possible as each case is taken on its own merits and discussed in detail with my vet, a veterinary pathologist, geneticist and the appropriate disease specialist.

<http://www.bordercolliepuppies.co.uk/ourpuppyguarantee.php>