

# ***Tackling the Beast Head-on!***

## **New TCC Screening Study Announced**

Marcia Dawson, DVM, Chairman HTF

For those who have never known a Scottie afflicted with bladder cancer, you can count yourself fortunate. In a breed estimated to be 16-20 times more at risk for Transitional Cell Carcinoma (TCC) than other breeds, any effort to tackle the disease is indeed welcome news. Now, with the STCA's endorsement and approval of HTF funding for a new screening study to be conducted by Dr. Debbie Knapp at Purdue University, the news could not be better.

Dr. Knapp is already well known to Scottie owners and the STCA for her tenacious, long-term research and clinical trials on TCC, a cancer that far too many of us have experienced in our dogs. Thirteen years ago, she and Dr. Larry Glickman conducted the first epidemiological study to characterize this disease in Scotties. Six years later, Dr. Knapp joined forces with Dr. Elaine Ostrander at the NIH to research the genetics of TCC in Scotties and other high-risk breeds, a project of major significance that is still underway. And now, in her study entitled ***Screening and Early Intervention to Positively Transform the Management of Urinary Bladder Cancer in Scottish Terriers***, Dr. Knapp plans to follow a population of 100 Scottish Terriers over a 3-year period with twice-a-year screenings.

The ultimate goal of this study is the development of a successful and routine screening protocol for Scotties and other high-risk breeds, leading to early intervention when needed using a relatively low risk medication. This protocol may ultimately save the lives of thousands of dogs, while avoiding the side effects from traditional cancer treatment and helping to lower health care costs for the owners.

The screenings will consist of a physical exam, ultrasound of the bladder, urine collection by free-catch for specialized urine assays and urinalysis, blood collection, and paperwork to be filled out by the owners. The screenings will take place year-round at Purdue and also in the fall and spring at two off-campus locations: Louisville, KY (Rose Shacklett, coordinator) and Springfield, IL (Lisa Hills, coordinator). There will be no cost to the Scottie owners for the screenings. If abnormal lesions are discovered in the screening, follow-up diagnostic work will be offered at Purdue, also at no cost to the owner.

Dr. Knapp's new study is an innovative approach in veterinary medicine in that it focuses on the prevention, early detection and early intervention of TCC in Scotties. In human medicine, we know that routine screenings and early diagnosis of disease can result in more successful treatment outcomes. But this is not a typical course of action in veterinary medicine. Too often the diagnosis of TCC in Scotties is made too late, when the cancer is too advanced and often has already spread to other areas, making treatment much less effective. Dr. Knapp is taking a proactive approach in that she wants to screen apparently healthy dogs starting at the minimum age of 7 years and then follow these dogs carefully over 3 years. This will allow Dr. Knapp and her team to detect the earliest,

pre-cancerous changes in the bladder wall, even before there are any symptoms in the Scottie. If abnormalities are found on screening and a diagnosis of TCC is then confirmed, Dr. Knapp will be able to intervene earlier than ever before with Deramaxx®, a drug similar to piroxicam. It is expected that this early intervention with a pill taken every day will result in regression or long-term control of the disease in the majority of affected Scotties.

Weighing the importance and the potential benefits of the study for our Scotties, the HTF and the STCA Board agreed to help fund the project to the level of \$30,000 per year for a 3-year period. The sponsor agreements with Purdue University are now officially signed, and the project has the green light!

There is no question that this study is a big commitment for the HTF, one that we enter into with consideration and care. Yet, we firmly believe that this project has the potential to provide the tools to routinely screen for, diagnose early and manage this terrible disease in our beloved Scotties, both now in the future. In fact, the study is already having an impact! In a practice run at Purdue on June 18th, TCC was discovered in Barb Zink's 11-year-old Rita, one of 7 Scotties screened. After confirmation of the diagnosis with a biopsy via cystoscopy, Rita is now the first case on Deramaxx, and so far, she is doing well.

In the ultimate analysis, the success of this important study can be achieved only through the participation of Scottie owners. If you are able and willing to enter your Scottie(s) in this study, please contact the individuals listed in the accompanying fact sheet for more information and details. For those unable to participate, and for all Scottie owners who understand the ravages of this disease, please consider contributing to this cause, in memory of so many beautiful dogs that we have lost and for the future of so many Scotties to come.

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## **New Purdue TCC Screening Study**

**Who is eligible?** Any Scottie 7 years of age or older, with no evidence of urinary tract disease, in good health with no diagnosis of any cancer or major organ dysfunction. Must be able to travel to one of 3 locations in the Midwest US.

**What?** Screenings every 6 months will consist of (1) physical exam, (2) urinary tract ultrasound, (3) urine collection via free catch for urinalysis and urine tests, (4) blood collection for various tests, (5) paperwork to be signed by owner. There will be no cost to the owner for these procedures.

**Where?** Screenings will be held year round at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. In addition, two off-campus sites will hold 1-2 day screening clinics twice a year in the spring and fall: Metropolitan Veterinary Specialty Services, Louisville, KY and Capitol Illini Veterinary Clinic, Chatham, IL.

**When?** The Screening Study is scheduled to start September 1, 2014 and will span the next 3 years. All appointments for screening clinics will be scheduled in advance. Times and dates TBD.

### **For Information about the Study and to Enroll Your Scottie:**

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### **For Contributions to the STCA Health Trust Fund:**

Lisa Kincheloe, Treasurer  
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**Contributions to the HTF may also be made on-line at the STCA Website:**

[www.stca.biz](http://www.stca.biz)