



Per-Erik Sundgren in memoriam

It is in the greatest feeling of sorrow we hereby inform you that Dr. Per-Erik Sundgren, after years of struggle with cancer, died on the first of January 2010, 73 years old.

Per-Erik Sundgren has influenced the preservation of dog breeds for decades, especially small populations with very limited genetic variation. Almost 20 years ago he became especially involved in the Icelandic Sheepdog.

Gudrun R. Gudjohnsen, at that time president of the Icelandic Kennel Club (Hundaraektarfélag Íslands/HRFÍ), met Per-Erik in a Nordic Kennel Union seminar about “inbreeding and how to preserve genetic variation in limited breed populations”.

At that time the Minister of Agriculture in Iceland had appointed a committee with the mission to suggest guidelines for future preservation of the Icelandic Sheepdog (further below). Gudrun was a part of the committee and she convinced the Minister to invite Per-Erik for a meeting with the committee in Iceland. This was very successful and for sure an important step towards the international breed cooperation, later known as Icelandic Sheepdog International Cooperation. ISIC was formed in 1996.

Some years before this, already in 1991, the Swedish Icelandic Sheepdog breed club organized the first breeding meeting with Per-Erik Sundgren and with the same focus (further below).

Since then, scientists, scientific studies and experiences have been very important in ISIC.

Some events from the past showing Per-Erik's involvement in the Icelandic Sheepdog. Per-Erik created the data programme Lathunden which we in use within ISIC to make genetic calculations. On our request, he translated Lathunden from Swedish into English - for our international use. Even when Per-Erik's health became worse, it didn't stop him from supporting ISIC. I feel sure that especially our ISIC data base responsible Gudni Águstsson and ISAA could verify that.

As late as last year, Per-Erik helped ISAA in USA to create a comprehensive data base of the U.S. information that goes back to the first imported Icelandic Sheepdogs in USA.

Per-Erik was also very much involved in Mental Description of dogs (MH), the method that several ISIC countries use for evaluation of dog mentality. He initiated the “spider diagram” for MH results.

Before his death, Per-Erik ensured that it will be possible to use Lathunden also in the future. 1991 “Breeding in small dog populations” Lecture and discussions with Per-Erik. Initiated and organized by the Icelandic Sheepdog breed club in Sweden. At the time P-E was the Swedish Kennel Club (SKK) adviser in genetics.

1995 Lecture and discussions for the Committee members in Iceland (also above). One of several results was that HRFÍ, the Icelandic Kennel Club, and no other club got full breed responsibility in Iceland. It included responsibility for all Icelandic Sheepdog registrations in Iceland.

2000 International breeding meeting for breeders of Icelandic Sheepdogs with Per-Erik Sundgren and Pieter Oliehoek in Uppsala, Sweden. It was organised by the Swedish breddclub.

2005 Present breed situation (at that time) since ISIC started. Linked to the ISIC seminar in Denmark, Per-Erik informed about a research initiated by ISIC/C.

My first lecture with Per-Erik Sundgren around 30 years ago was not about genetics. It focused on dog mentality and spreading of dog diseases. Per-Erik were interested in so many big and important questions. Per-Erik has been one of my mentors since then. We were equally curious to explore reasons and effects in different dog matters. That made our talks long and phone bills high but it was always worth it, for both of us I think.

Both Gudrun and Wilfred asked where the Icelandic Sheepdog would have been without Per-Eriks fantastic energy and interest and that is worth thinking of...

Finally I will use some of Donna McDermott's words about Per-Erik as they could be my own: "What an amazing man with his kind heart and patient, gentle mentoring."

On behalf of ISIC/C
Hans-Åke Sperne