

Transcript:

Dr. Jean Dodds interview (part 1 of 2)

Dr. Becker: Hi, this is Dr. Karen Becker, and today I have an extremely exciting interview. Dr. Jean Dodds is here with me via Skype. Dr. Dodds has graciously agreed to answer some of my questions this morning, very early from California. Thank you so much, Dr. Dodds, for joining me.

Dr. Dodds: Thank you.

Dr. Becker: Many of you probably already know Dr. Dodds. She lectures worldwide on clinical pathology and hematology, blood banking, immunology, endocrinology, nutrition, and holistic medicine. She lectures worldwide lecturing on all these subjects. In 1986, she started the non-profit organization Hemopet, which really set the standard for veterinary transfusion medicine. In 1991, Dr. Dodds started the Pet Lifeline, which is the greyhound rescue adoption organization that, of course, physiologically feeds the transfusion medicine. Then there's Hemolife at the same time. Each endeavor has had worldwide recognition.

I was introduced to Dr. Dodds in 1999 when I started using her lab for my thyroid testing. And really, the primary reason why I started using Dr. Dodds' lab was I recognized that the other veterinary labs that were testing thyroid levels were lumping every possible dog and cat into the exact same scenario, which means labs were lumping the two-year-old intact chihuahua with the 12-year-old normal reference values of the spade female husky. I realized that although dogs are dogs, there are some really big metabolic and physiologic differences between those two groups of dogs. Dr. Dodds not only has taken that into consideration, she has also formed a massive databank that really is tracking some of those physiologic differences.

My first couple of questions for you, Dr. Dodds, is this. It seems kind of logical that veterinarians would recognize that those are pretty different parameters for measuring. Why do you think that you're the only one worldwide that's really taking those dynamic factors into account?

Dr. Dodds: It's really odd, and I thought about that often, Karen. For example, Michigan State University has an even larger database over the years than we do, and it's all computerized as ours is. So it should be pretty easy to do that. The published information showing that breeds and different ages of animals vary in terms of thyroid parameters and other lab parameters has been published since the 70s. So I guess it's pretty odd. We are the only one that does it.

Dr. Becker: There are several different factors that we love about using your lab. The thing that I like the most is that in addition to the computer-generated data information, of course, you're also taking into account your personalized comment, which is one of my favorite things, a bonus addition. You personally review every single blood test that goes through your lab.

Dr. Dodds: That's correct.

The Rise of Autoimmune Diseases

Dr. Becker: That provides a lot of insight because you're able to hand-review some of those – not only results, but also personal recommendations, which is really outstanding and one of the factors that all of us like about you offering your particular services.

When I started using your lab, I begin recognizing how many dogs have autoimmune thyroiditis. Talk to me a little bit about autoimmune thyroiditis. It feels to me that it's on the rise, but probably what's happening is we're doing more diagnostics uncovering that particular autoimmune condition. Would you agree?

Dr. Dodds: Actually, both situations are true. It's true in humans as well, and probably our audience is well aware that immune-mediated or autoimmune diseases are on the rise everywhere. It's partly a problem with environmental exposures, global warming. There is surely better diagnostics than there used to be, but it's not that simple because in some of the cases, you don't even realize that they have this disease until you do the critical thyroid antibody testing, which wasn't available 20 years ago, at least in veterinary medicine.

Symptoms of Hypothyroidism

Dr. Becker: That would help explain it because when I went to school even about 20 years ago, we certainly learned about hypothyroidism, but there's not much talk about autoimmune thyroiditis.

The other thing I have found since getting out of veterinary school and practicing veterinary medicine – in my practice, we focus a lot of nutrition – is this: in that school I was taught to wait until the obvious symptoms are presented, which were the obvious dog losing hair, grouchy, hoarse skin coat, and lethargic. What I found in my practice is that you can have physically a pretty vibrant animal that could still be dealing with metabolic disease. Talk to me a little bit about some of those other symptoms that people should be looking for with a hypothyroid dog that maybe they're not.

Dr. Dodds: Okay, I think one of the things I forgot to say earlier is the inbreeding and line breeding -- pure-bred or hybrid-breed dogs -- will increase the genetic predisposition as we change the environment. That's true of the animals much more so than people. The other signs

will occur for up to a year before the classical signs we're looking for happen. And it's not until 70 percent of the thyroid gland has been damaged by this autoimmune destructive process that we see the classical signs. So the animal doesn't wake up tomorrow, Karen, with hypothyroidism. It has to progress from that.

The usual early signs are behavioral issues – erratic, unstable temperament, passivity, aggression, irritability, and they don't pay attention when called. There's just a variety of subtle things that sometimes the family doesn't notice because they happen progressively on a slow basis. It's only the people that visit that notice the difference.

Then you can have subtle weight gain – we call that idiopathic obesity, or obesity of no apparent cause. The skin and hair coat, as we mentioned, can be perfect, and yet metabolically the animal is really, really being damaged.

The Role of Vaccination

Dr. Becker: Are you finding any potential link between vaccination and the autoimmune issues that you're seeing?

Dr. Dodds: Clearly we can. Vaccination is just one of the so-called environmental triggers. We have too many drugs, flea products, heartworm products, tick products that we have to have. Imagine being in a country where a hundred percent of the time, you're exposed to these risks, or even an area of our country that's like that. We have all the chemicals and we have vaccines over and over and over again, and they're not clean, pure products. They've got remnants of tissue cultures of other activators and other chemicals in them. And I fastidiously say those are toxic tissue cultures that we're injecting, for the most part, to the animals. We have a few intranasal vaccines, but mostly they're injected.

Dr. Becker: So on that note, I know that you've been actively involved in co-creating the Rabies Challenge Fund. Talk to me a little bit about what the Rabies Challenge Fund is.

Dr. Dodds: The Rabies Challenge Fund is a not-for-profit charitable trust. What we're doing is concurrent five- and seven-year trials to try to determine that rabies vaccines don't have to be given every three year – as they are by law now – but every five or hopefully every seven years. These data have already been generated from France. But, of course, our regulations are slightly different, so the French data are not acceptable to license here.

We're halfway through the fourth year of the concurrent trials. And so within the next two years, we should have a trial that not only will license a five-year vaccine for dogs, but also tell us exactly what antibody level in the blood is truly protective for dogs. This is because right now, we extrapolate from people.

Dr. Becker: What an amazing and exciting research! Certainly, that endeavor is going to be beneficial immunologically for all of us that are interested in making sure that our dogs and cats are protected against rabies, but not necessarily toxic with rabies. You can learn more about that at <http://rabieschallengefund.org>.

My next question is this. Your lab is known for accuracy, reliability, and a patented method of interpreting test results. Tell me a little bit more about this.

Dr. Dodds: Yes, our methods are patented in terms of our database that we've collected for more than 25 years now, looking at the age, breed, and activity – a couch potato versus an Iditarod racer. They're going to have different metabolic needs. And so that's part of it. Being a clinical pathologist for nearly 48 years now as a veterinarian (which means I went to veterinary school when I was a child), I'm very, very careful about reliability, reproducibility, and rigid, rigid standards for how we run our assays. And, of course, our new technology since 2009 is entirely without the use of radioisotopes. We're the only green, environmentally safe, non-radioisotopic assays for thyroid function in dogs.

Hemopet's Lab Testing Service

Dr. Becker: This is great, so you can feel good not only about test results, but about protecting the environment when you submit your dog's lab work to Dr. Dodds.

So Dr. Dodds, you're recommending annual testing for dogs that not only could be genetically predisposed to hypothyroidism, but also for overall well-being. Is that correct?

Dr. Dodds: That's correct.

Dr. Becker: And you are suggesting that for animals that have been on thyroid support or have been diagnosed with hypothyroidism that are currently monitored, there's no problem in asking local veterinarians to use your services versus the regular lab. If a client has just brand-new heard about you, how would they go about submitting thyroid test results to you versus their regular local veterinary lab?

Dr. Dodds: First of all, they can download all the information from our website, <http://www.hemopet.org>, under the sub-file Hemolife Diagnostics. They can download the form, read all about it, go to their veterinarian, and say "I've heard about Dr. Dodds and her studies with whatever, and I'd like to have her do the thyroid test for my animals from now on." Then the veterinarian will check the blood, and the results go back through the veterinarian and to the pet owner at the same time. Because as pet owners or guardians, we need to have a copy of all the results of our lab tests, because you'll never know if you're traveling. If you have

an emergency, you need to take the results with you, so the veterinarian now caring for the pet has access to that information rather than try to find it.

Saliva Testing in Dogs

Dr. Becker: Yup, and proactive guardianship really means being empowered to be a part of your pet, or actually the dictator of your pet's overall care. But that certainly means playing an active role and, if you don't know what results mean, learning and finding out what your pet's test results mean.

You always have something exciting and new brewing. You're active in all sorts of different endeavors. What's the most recent exciting thing happening over there at Hemopet?

Dr. Dodds: We recently got a new patented technology. It's a first in the world, and it's called NutraScan. It's a way to scan saliva from pets (dogs only at this point), and where you can look for those antibodies in saliva that come from your GI tract against particular foods that your body should not see. In other words, we're looking at food sensitivity and intolerance.

The important thing about that, Karen, is that it's not synonymous with food allergy. We talk loosely about the term "food allergy" all the time, and that's a different situation. True allergies to food are extremely rare. What we're looking at is the body's sensitivity to or intolerance of a particular food. And you have the classical signs – gas, a little bit of rumbly tummy, a little bit of diarrhea, a little bit of constipation, and even vomiting. What happens is it doesn't occur right after you eat the offending foods; it can occur two to 72 hours later. So often we don't associate the animals' upset with what they ate, because it was a couple of days before that.