

## Day Two: Welcome

---

A. Duane Butherus, Ph.D.  
Chair, Grants Committee  
CHF

Steve Remspecher  
Director of Marketing  
Nestlé Purina PetCare

Dr. Duane Butherus said breed health liaisons play a crucial role in helping the Canine Health Foundation fulfill its mission to raise money efficiently, manage it well, and spend it wisely.

“We need you from the standpoint of telling us what the problems are in your breed. There’s no way we can look into those problems if we don’t know what they are,” he said. “The better, more accurate and up-to-date your health surveys are, the better we can serve you by finding the best researchers to work on these problems.”

Dr. Butherus explained that CHF issues an annual request for proposals to over 5,000 researchers around the world. The document lists the top diseases identified in breed health surveys, as well as conditions of special interest to specific breeds.

Grants are divided into two categories. Projects ranging from \$12,000 to \$250,000 in value are assessed annually, and are subject to peer review and numerical ranking before they are forwarded to the Grants Committee. This category of work receives about \$1.8 million in annual funding.

A series of smaller grants, called ACORNs, worth no more than \$12,000 plus 8% overhead, was initiated two years ago at the suggestion of the late Bob Kelly. Grants are reviewed weekly, and decisions are made within 30 days of receipt. More than 100 grants have been approved, and the program has been particularly successful through the revolution in genomics. “Things that used to cost us \$100,000 over two years can now be done for \$12,000 in one year,” Dr. Butherus said.

He identified prevention, treatment, and cure as the Foundation’s three-pronged approach to funding. Genomics research comes under the heading of prevention, which received 78% of the major grant money approved in January 2007. *The basic operating principle, he said, is that “you don’t eradicate good dogs from your breeding programs because they’re carriers. You substitute for them so you don’t shrink your gene pool. But that means knowing who is and who isn’t a carrier.”*

Treatment of chronic canine diseases received 13% of the grant fund, with the balance directed to methods of reversing the effects of disease, mainly by applying stem cells to

cardiac problems. "We're excited about this," Dr. Butherus said. "We're not going to put all of our funds in that pot, but we're going to start and see what kind of results we get."

CHF's key priority is to get information back to Parent Clubs, through breeder symposia and the biennial conference, he said.

Steve Remspecher noted the large number of first-time attendees at the conference. "If we've done our job," he said, "every one of them will go back and be an ambassador for the Canine Health Foundation and get the message out."

Nestlé Purina's support goes back to the first Parent Club health conference in 1997. He described other ways in which the company helps CHF to deliver its message. That commitment has endured "because it's the right thing to do. As a world leader in pet nutrition, Nestlé feels it must take a leadership position in finding cures for diseases in dogs around the world." With more than \$20 million invested in canine health research, "we're making that happen." And "for this, we owe each of you a big thank you. It's because of you that this organization is in place and is working."

Remspecher urged each Parent Club to increase its funding for health research. Clubs currently hold about \$3 million in donor-advised funds and "there's an opportunity to spend that money," possibly in coordination with other clubs that face similar health issues.

He challenged participants "to overcome the obstacles that have inhibited your club's ability to address the health issues facing your breed, whether those obstacles be financial, the lack of a plan, club politics, or that they're just not on the radar screen. We're here to help."