15. **Recognition of a ridgeless variant of ridgeback breeds (Rhodesian and Thai)?**
Equal recognition in the breed standard of individuals which are genetically impossible to avoid in order to breed what is accepted in the breed standard has been an issue in our commission since 2012. In 2013 we sent a list to GC, on their request, of the breeds in question. The breed standard of Great Dane and Peruvian Hairless has been changed, although they are still they are not equally recognized in the breed standard (merle Grand Danois, the hairy variant of Peruvian and Mexican Hairless). Nothing has happened with the Rhodesian Ridgeback or Thai Ridgeback. In June 2016, the Rhodesian Ridgeback World Congress was arranged in Lund, Sweden. Both Kirsi Sainio (president of FCI Scientific Commission) and Astrid Indrebø (president of FCI Breeding Commission until 29.05.2016) were invited to speak at the congress. One of the issues that were discussed, was equal recognition of the Rhodesian Ridgeless dogs. There was a lot of positivity in the audience for our proposal to recognize the Rhodesian Ridgeless as a variety of Rhodesian Ridgeback; the two variants could be crossed, but would not have to compete with each other in the show ring.
It is possible to breed ridgebacks without breeding ridgeless dogs, if at least one of the parents is homozygot for the ridge allele. But the result will be a high risk of dermoid sinus, which might be fatal for the dog: Minutes of the meeting of the FCI Commission for Breeding, Sochi (RU), 27/05/2017 7
Hilbertz et al (2007): 10 out of 12 dogs with dermoid sinus was homozygote for the ridge allel (83%)
Hillbertz (2005): No reports of dermoid sinus in ridgeless dogs of this breed
If the ridgeless dogs were recognized as a variety of the Rhodesian dog (or Thai dogs), the two varieties could be crossed: A dog homozygote for the ridge gene can be mated with a ridgeless dog which to a great extend will reduce the risk of dermoid sinus.
Two heterozygote dogs will produce 25% ridgeless dogs – and 25% homozygote dogs
A heterozygote dog mated to a ridgeless dog will produce about 50% ridgeless dogs
They will be registered either as ridgebacks or ridgeless dogs – depending on the ridge
They do not have to compete with each other in the show ring; they can be judged as varieties of the same breed
Astrid Indreboe: this issue has been discussed in Scientific Commission and Breeding Commission many times. Should we send a proposal? There could be legal problems like for example it happened in Germany, if Government realizes ridgeless dogs are not registered. There has been World Congress of Rhodesian Ridgeback breeders and audience of this congress was very positive towards recognition of ridgeless variety. The position of South African Kennel Club in not known.
Discussion: there is need for data, how many ridgeless puppies are actually born. The healthiest variety of this breed is not recognized and some of these puppies are not registered so we really don't know the proportion of ridgeless puppies. Ridgeless puppies are often killed or neglected, recognition of ridgeless variety is therefore also a animal welfare issue.
The BREEDING COMMISSION had a consensus that ridgeless dogs are needed. BREEDING COMMISSION recommends that ridgeless Rhodesian Ridgebacks and Thai Ridgebacks could be recognized as a breed variety. Ridgeless dogs of Thai Ridgeback and Rhodesian Ridgeback should be recognized as a breed variety, this would reduce incidence of dermoid sinus in these dogs dramatically. Ridgeback breeds need these dogs.
This matter has to be discussed with Scientific Commission and we ask Scientific Commission to speak about it with South Africa and Thailand.
Proposal: The Breeding Commission asks the General Committee to send the following proposal to the Scientific and Standard Commission. The ridgeless dogs of Rhodesian and Thai Ridgeback should be recognized as varieties of the breeds. As varieties of the same breed they can be crossed. This will dramatically reduce the risk of dermoid sinus in the ridge-dogs.