



## **PIONEERING PROFESSOR IN VETERINARY MOLECULAR GENETICS CELEBRATED WITH PRESTIGIOUS AWARD**

Professor Dr Tosso Leeb has won the International award as part of one of the largest and most distinguished veterinary awards in the world, the International Canine Health Awards. The accolade was awarded to Professor Leeb in recognition of his expertise in veterinary molecular genetics, which has led to the formation of a world-class canine genetics research program in Bern, Switzerland.

Professor Leeb, who is Director of the Institute of Genetics of the Vetsuisse Faculty, also leads his own research group which is working tirelessly to identify the causative genetic variants for inherited diseases, the results of which have led to a large number of publications that are highly cited by veterinary clinicians and scientists alike. Furthermore, he has also developed many genetic tests that now allow the eradication of many hereditary diseases in dogs.

The awards, which are organised by the Kennel Club Charitable Trust and underwritten by a major gift from Vernon and Shirley Hill of Metro Bank, highlight those individuals who go one step further to promote the health and wellbeing of dogs through their work in the world of veterinary science.

Whilst this year's ceremony was unable to go ahead in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 winners have been awarded their respective prize money and invited to next year's event to receive their commemorative plaques.

Professor Leeb's research is focused on the analysis of inherited traits and diseases in domestic animals. As well as dogs, he works on other mammalian species including cats, cattle, goats, horse and sheep. He has been a pioneer of molecular veterinary genetics over many years, contributing to the identification of more than 50 causative

genetic variants for inherited diseases in dogs. In turn, the genetic tests developed have greatly helped to eradicate many devastating hereditary diseases in dogs, including hereditary nasal parakeratosis in Labrador Retrievers and Greyhounds.

After hearing of his award, Professor Leeb said: “It is a great honour to receive this award, which recognises the impact of clinical genetic research for canine health and provides a huge motivation for me to intensify this line of research. It is immensely gratifying to see that the results of our research are valued by dog breeders and owners and help to advance breeding programs for healthier dogs.

“The award will directly enable us to investigate additional inherited diseases in dogs. Even more importantly, it will facilitate the acquisition of further research funds for health-related genetic research in dogs and will thus have a very significant and positive impact on our work.”

The International Canine Health Awards were awarded in four categories: the International Award, with a prize of £40,000; the Lifetime Achievement Award, with a prize of £10,000; the Postgraduate Student Inspiration Award, with a prize of £10,000; and the Breed Health Coordinator Award, with a prize of £1,000. Nominations for the awards were judged by a distinguished international panel of influential veterinarians and scientific researchers.

Dr Andrew Higgins, Chairman of the ICHA panel and trustee of the Kennel Club Charitable Trust, which runs the awards, said: “We are so pleased to present the 2020 International Award to Tosso Leeb. He is a highly successful canine geneticist who has made a huge contribution to vital global research into inherited diseases. He has not only demonstrated commitment and perseverance towards his research, but the results of his efforts are making a real difference to the lives and welfare of dogs. He is a very deserving winner of this award.”

Vernon Hill, founder and chairman emeritus of Metro Bank, and whose major gift underwrites the International Canine Health Awards, said: “Many congratulations to Professor Leeb on his win. We are delighted to recognise his many years of dedicated work with this award and wish him all the best for the future.”

For more information on the International Canine Health Awards please visit [thekennelclub.org.uk/health/international-canine-health-awards/](http://thekennelclub.org.uk/health/international-canine-health-awards/).

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to Editors**

The International Canine Health Awards are organised by the Kennel Club Charitable Trust and funded by Vernon and Shirley Hill.

### **About Vernon and Shirley Hill:**

Vernon Hill is the founder and Chairman Emeritus of Metro Bank, the UK's first new High Street bank in more than 100 years. The revolutionary bank currently has 70 stores across London, the Home Counties, the Midlands and Manchester. Metro Bank is publicly listed on the London Stock Exchange, symbol: MTRO.

Vernon and Shirley Hill, and Sir Duffield, their Yorkshire Terrier, have a deep commitment to the veterinary community including:

- Sponsorship of The University of Pennsylvania World Veterinary Award
- Sponsorship of The Hill Pavilion at The University of Pennsylvania Veterinary School
- Creation and funding of the International Canine Health Awards
- Funding of a recent project with The University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine to train and deploy working dogs to detect Covid-19

### **The Kennel Club**

The Kennel Club is the largest organisation in the UK devoted to dog health, welfare and training. Its objective is to ensure that dogs live healthy, happy lives with responsible owners.

It runs the country's largest registration database for both pedigree and crossbreed dogs and the Petlog database, which is the UK's biggest reunification service for microchipped animals. The Kennel Club is accredited by UKAS to certify members of its Assured Breeder Scheme, which is the only scheme in the UK that monitors breeders in order to protect the welfare of puppies and breeding bitches. It also runs the UK's largest dog training programme, the Good Citizen Dog Training Scheme and

accredits dog trainers and behaviourists through the Kennel Club Accredited Instructors Scheme.

It licenses shows and clubs across a wide range of activities, which help dog owners to bond and enjoy life with their dogs. The Kennel Club runs the world's greatest dog show, Crufts, and the Discover Dogs event at ExCeL London, which is a fun family day out that educates people about how to buy responsibly and care for their dog.

The Kennel Club invests in welfare campaigns, dog training and education programmes and the Kennel Club Charitable Trust, which supports research into dog diseases and dog welfare charities, including Kennel Club Breed Rescue organisations that re-home dogs throughout the UK. The Kennel Club jointly runs health screening schemes with the British Veterinary Association.