



The Irish Wolfhound Health Group

Dentition Study

In September 2014, the IWHG launched an observational Dentition Study into the development of teeth and jaw alignment in Irish Wolfhound puppies. This was as a result of:

- (a) an apparent rise in canine orthodontic referrals (especially for young puppies)
- (b) the Kennel Club's inclusion of "misplaced lower canines" as the only "Breed Watch" point for Irish Wolfhounds

With canine dentistry experiencing something of an upsurge in popularity, we are concerned that some owners may be persuaded to have their puppies operated on for conditions which could potentially correct themselves naturally given time. There have been several incidences reported to the IWHG in which vets have advised owners that puppies as young as 10 weeks, needed surgery to correct dentition faults. This is of great concern, especially considering the possible harmful effects of general anaesthesia on young sighthound puppies, of which some vets are still not aware.

We have been particularly interested in whether the position of the deciduous (baby) teeth has a direct effect on the way the adult teeth erupt – with specific reference to Wolfhound puppies. This is one of the concerns of canine orthodontists, who propose that surgery to remove deciduous teeth may be required to prevent the incorrect eruption and placement of permanent teeth. Having gathered information from owners and breeders over a number of years now, our contention remains that because of their rapid and prolonged growth, Irish Wolfhound puppies do not conform to the normal pattern of dental development expected in most other breeds. It is not uncommon for Irish Wolfhound puppies' mouths to continue to alter up until 14 months of age, or even longer. Furthermore, having followed the development of a number of 6-10 week old puppies, who had less than perfect alignment of the deciduous teeth, we can say that unless there is evidence of jaw deformity, misplaced deciduous lower canines cannot be viewed as a reliable indicator that the permanent teeth will be similarly affected. These malocclusions of the deciduous teeth are usually transient and occur as a result of a temporary disparity in relative jaw growth.

We are keen to present The Kennel Club with an accurate picture of how a typical wolfhound puppy's mouth develops. **So we need your help as owners and breeders**, to supply us with enough information and photographic evidence to successfully challenge the 'Breed Watch' point, so that it only applies to Wolfhounds over 18 months of age.

In addition, we eventually hope to be able to discover what part genetics play in dental development in Irish Wolfhounds - the ultimate aim being to eliminate some painful and debilitating dental conditions, by careful breeding choices.

If you currently have a litter, are expecting one soon, or own a puppy that your vet has told you has a mouth fault, please contact us for further details on how any further information you provide could be beneficial to this study.

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