



September 2016



PATRON: TRUDIE SUMNER

Welcome

Welcome to this first edition of the IWHG's E-Newsletter. It's an exciting new stage in our ongoing development and just another way of listening to what you want and delivering it. The IWHG is your Group so apart from keeping you informed, we want your feedback, your views and your ideas.

As you can see we now have a wonderful new image, created by one of our long-standing supporters, Anne-Birgitte Larsen, making this a truly international collaboration as she is from Norway – we couldn't be more grateful for her priceless donation of time and expertise in creating it for us.

And we also have the amazing Anne Vaudin to thank for her ongoing and tireless energy and support in designing and managing our website. We're sure you'll agree, she's excelled herself this time – worth all the long hours that she's dedicated to it and I'm sure Paul, her long-suffering husband will be delighted

and relieved that we've now launched and it's back to business as usual!

The team has expanded and this edition introduces everybody, so that you can put a face to the name. The people whose faces you don't see as part of the extended team are the partners and spouses of everyone involved, who from time to time have to take second place to what is actually a hobby, but often feels like a second full time job! We would like to thank them all.

We have Gary Bogart as a new member and he has taken on the responsibility of Editor of the Newsletter and also Website liaison, so he is going to have his hands full, but we are very lucky to have his skills on call. Elaine, his wife, may not agree with us as it is already taking up a lot of his time, but it's all part of a new strategy to respond quicker than we have been.

All Groups/committees will operate slower than an individual, because they have to discuss and reach consensus

before publishing and responding. However, in addition, we are all volunteers and we all work so that can also add time to the process. Now that we have the new additions to the Group and the new skills, we're aiming to improve that.

To that end we have changed the status of our Facebook Group from Closed to Open as we want to reach as many people in the Wolfhound world as possible. We also have a second Facebook presence with the IWHG Page, which is our News update page. We will continue with this and, between the two, hope to make sure everyone has access to discussion, documents, announcements and research resources.

Our aim is to keep everyone involved and informed. Remember, this is your group, engage with it, talk to us, share with each other. Our information is only as good as the info we share, so check out our studies and surveys and the new publishing of heart testing results – Get involved and make a difference!

Meet the Team

Linda Forret

Secretary

Hi, I am Linda, I live with Bill Close, in the beautiful village of Aberdour, Fife

I have had dogs all my life, firstly mainly collies as I grew up, then I had a beautiful golden retriever while my children were growing up. Finally, with the children older and more responsible, I was able to realise the dream I had held for over 20 years – to live with an Irish Wolfhound!

Of course, as lots of you will recognise, one is not enough, and we certainly had quite a small pack here at Tapsalteerie for a while, as together with the wolfhounds we also had bearded collies. We were very busy looking after them all and for a time we showed in both breeds. Nowadays, our numbers are far less and there are no beardies at all.

In Scotland we found that there were very few events for wolfhounds, and eventually

those few stopped altogether and so with a few other like-minded owners we tried to re-establish a Scottish club. It was hard work, as the geographical size of Scotland, in relation to the number of owners, meant that organising events was always going to be tricky. We persevered and now we host heart testing sessions, and regularly offer walks in various parts of Scotland, as well as our renowned "Annual Gaitherin" held in July. We are delighted that this has grown in size every year, and that we are so well supported by regular attenders from the deerhound community and others with a variety of breeds.

We also managed to take the Scottish Club to a level where we could be recognised the Kennel Club, and this in turn meant that the Irish Wolfhound Club of Scotland could participate in official discussions regarding the breed, particularly the Irish Wolfhound Health Group. Our club may be one of the smaller groups, but we have a very active and dedicated committee and membership, and three of our members currently sit on that Group.

Our affix, 'Tapsalteerie', was chosen many years before we ever registered it! I was looking up something in the dictionary when



I noticed the word, and on reading the definition, decided that it very definitely described our home – it is the old Scots word for 'Topsy Turvy', or 'upside down'.

We currently have three wolfhounds, Peli, Bridie and Maya, all have shown promise in the ring, and each with their own unique personality.

I would like to wish the Health Group a bright future on the launch of their new look, and look forward to seeing it flourish.

Rebecca Peek

I was born into a family of dog lovers; my mother began breeding Miniature Long Haired Dachshunds in the early 1960s. When I was six I was allowed to choose my very own dog, so I asked for an Irish Wolfhound. Predictably, the answer was 'no' and I was told to choose something smaller, so I chose an Afghan Hound and there began a long association these most beautiful, but very high maintenance hounds. We bred and showed the Afghans and Dachshunds for many years under the family affix Yansukhim, which Deborah, my sister still retains and although we no longer breed either, we still own them.

In 1979 I eventually became the owner of my first IWH and foundation bitch, Ch Finloren Hester of Yansukhim, who became a general championship BIS winner. It was the beginning of a very long love affair with the

breed and one that continues. When I bred from Hester I established my own kennel name Milkwood, and although I've been in the breed for over 35 years, do not breed very often and have never owned a large number at any one time. I have been very fortunate that from a very small number of dogs, I have bred and produced several champions and other award winning dogs. I have also owned and successfully shown Petit Bassets Griffon Vendeen.

I have been a member of the IWHG since its inception in 2004, first as Treasurer and then as Secretary and now as an ordinary member. I am passionate about improving health and longevity in the breed and also the need to nurture and bring on the next generation of wolfhound owners/breeders that will be the future custodians of the breed. Every generation of Wolfhound

owners is privileged to own this very special breed, but our time is brief and we need to ensure that we have the next generation



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ready to carry the breed forward and that we leave it in the best state that we can to make that possible.

Maura Lyons

I've had wolfhounds for just over 20 years, having got our first girl, Spooky, in 1996. She started a fascination with this laid-back breed. I find them very easy to live with, they get on well as part of our family and that is why I love them so much. Spooky died at just over 10 yrs old of DCM. Daisy and Myrtle are shown in the photo. Daisy was our second wolfhound, who we lost aged 9yrs 7months from bloat. Myrtle is still with us aged 5yrs 6 months and we have been joined by Florrie who is 2 yrs 6 months now. We live in Scotland and we like nothing better than having a lovely walk in the Scottish countryside, either up a hill, through some woodland or along a beach, or best yet, a combination of all three!

I have a degree in botany and a PhD in molecular genetics and work as a laboratory manager in a tissue culture laboratory.

I'm passionate about working to improve the health of our breed, and naturally my interest lies in the genetics of inherited diseases, and how we can utilise breeding strategies to minimise the risks of producing puppies who suffer from inherited conditions. I'm also interested in understanding the genetic analysis of our breed at a population level, and how we can use information like coefficient of inbreeding (COI) or ancestor loss coefficient (AVK) to make informed breeding decisions when



making mate choices for our own wolfhounds. I hope to breed from Florrie in the future, she has a pedigree full of long-lived hounds, so I need to be very careful when choosing a mate for her, and try to build on the hard-work of her breeder: to breed healthy, robust and long-lived wolfhounds.

Marion Finney

I have always been dog crazy and started showing as a teenager. My first breed was Yorkshire Terriers but a whirlwind romance brought me into Irish Wolfhounds and that love of the breed (and maybe a man too !!!) has now been with me 36 years.

Not many folk can say they shared their honeymoon with an Irish Wolfhound tagging along, but I did and he seemed to enjoy our honeymoon ventures as much as we did.

Now all those years later our lives still mainly revolve around the daily care of our most beloved hounds. We also now keep a pack of Miniature Wire and Kaninchen Dachshunds, all enjoying an idyllic life on our farm with us.

We like to see all our hounds fit for function and still able to give chase to anything that moves. We think an important requirement for a Wolfhound and its health.

Health is very important to us too and I guess this was one of the many reasons we became founder members of the IWHG. The fifteen or so years that the group has been in existence has really flown by and it's very

satisfying looking through the IWHG website to get a good idea of all the Group has achieved – a little acorn has grown into a big oak tree in quite a short time.

To encourage Heart Testing by all breeders in both the UK and Ireland has been a passion of mine. It's sad to see litters still being sold without both parents having been heart tested.

I have enjoyed my years in the Group. I founded the Facebook page in 2014, which opened many new doors for the Group. It is a great source for people to get the opportunity to ask health and other questions in an open forum and for the group to notify people of upcoming events. Very much two-way positive traffic in helping Irish Wolfhounds. I also am very proud of the massive Raffle I organised with some willing



helpers at Crufts 2015, which netted the biggest amount of money ever achieved in one event for the Group.

Being Irish I guess gives one an even bigger right to be a custodian of the breed. I am proud to carry that honour very high.

Jackie Watson

Treasurer

I joined the IWHG in January 2014 and was quickly talked into taking over the Treasurer's role by the late Jean Malley, I agreed, knowing Jean was very ill but never knew how ill she actually was. This has been a very hard act to follow.

My background is in finance, working as a finance officer for a local North East Charity with a turnover in excess of £20m. I have been with them for 25 years and whilst there

gained my degree in Business and Finance as a mature student.

In March 1998 we took ownership of our first Irish Wolfhound – Hibeck Mr Watson (Flynn) who sadly died aged 3.5 years of DCM, a stark introduction to Irish Wolfhound health.

In 2002 we purchased our foundation bitch Hibeck Zam Wessell at Rivenhound, to date we have had 3 litters, only breeding to keep something for ourselves. Always with the optimum goal in mind of producing good temperaments in healthy happy hounds.



Alison Messenger

My first sight of an Irish Wolfhound was in a newspaper, his name was Mulligan and I wanted him so badly. I was 11. My own Mulligan was a present to myself for my 21st birthday. Through him I discovered there were dog shows and clubs and a Kennel Club. I went to some IW club shows just to see other wolfhounds and got a job marking catalogues. However NO WAY was I ever going to be seen running around a ring with my dog.....

After "running around a ring with my dog" on a regular basis came my first judging appointment in 1996. I have judged extensively at open show level, including the open shows for the IW Club, the IW Society and the IWC of Ireland, all huge honours. Since my move to Ireland in 1999 I have been privileged to award Green Stars in IWs twice and last year also Rhodesian Ridgebacks, Dalmatians, and PBGVs. I have had an IW and a RR champion and have bred one litter of wolfhounds.

I was very flattered to be asked to join the IWHG and am looking forward to working



with a very knowledgeable and diverse group, some of whom I have known for many years.

Wendy Heather

Like many Irish Wolfhound owners, I fell in love with the breed long before I was able to own one, this grew to 2, 3 and more. Irish Wolfhounds are my companions, my friends and my hobby in showing and breeding. I run a small but very successful dog & cat grooming parlour, my professional background has always been canine related. Starting in rescue shelters dealing with behavioural issues and then moving into lecturing animal care and bespoke canine courses. I hold formal qualifications in animal behaviour and hope to continue my studies over the next few years.

I am also a committee member on the British Dog Groomers Association, a role that allows me to voice my views about my industry and strive to improve it.

I am the current coordinator for the Irish Wolfhound Regional Heart Testing scheme. I have owned Irish Wolfhounds since 2008 and have been amazed with how lovely the people in the breed are. With the support of my close friend and mentor, Jan Pain, I stepped into breeding. Since owning Wolfhounds I have bred 3 litters and I hope that I am able to further the health of the breed and continue the success and hard work of my mentor who entrusted me with



my foundation bitch. I am also on the Society B list and Club C list for judging.

Miranda Brace

In 1968, my husband Bernard and I bought our first Wolfhound from the Sanctuary Kennel of Margaret Harrison and May Atfield. In 1970, a foundation bitch joined us from the Brabyns Kennel of Sue Hudson and we registered our kennel name, Braehead, a few months later. All Braehead hounds go back to these two in one way or another

Having turned down three invitations to judge before I felt competent to do so, I accepted my first appointment in the late 1970s. I was passed to award Challenge Certificates in the breed in 1986 and have done so many times since, including Crufts in 1998. I have judged the breed at Championship level in Europe and at match

level in the United States, and have judged many other breeds at Open Show level including Group and BIS. I also judge Otterhounds at open level.

Member of Kennel Club since 1993

Life member and past committee member of the Irish Wolfhound Club

Founder member and current committee member of the Irish Wolfhound Society

Past committee member of the Otterhound Club

Past committee member, then secretary then chairman of Dorking and District Canine Association. I write the breed notes for 'Our Dogs' weekly paper, which I have done since 1982 and have written many articles for them and various breed publications. I currently proof read for IW World, the magazine of the European IW Congress



I have given many talks on the history of the breed and its relevance to the standard

Tim Finney

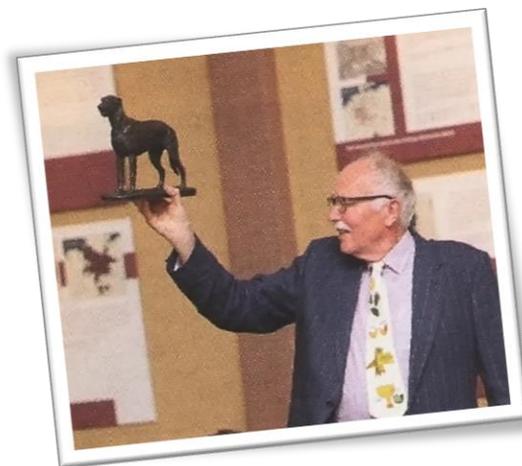
Chairman

I acquired my first Wolfhound, Ir Ch Ardour of Nendrum ("Bran") in 1965. He was a great pet, and very beautiful – so much so that I was quickly persuaded into the sport of dog showing. His successes led on to my getting a bitch from Sheelagh Seale, Ballykelly Mary, and that was the start of it all. We ("we" is myself and Marion, who joined me in 1980) are now about 14 generations down the line, and everything here goes back to dear Bran. We currently have 6 Wolfhounds, and as many Miniature and Kaninchen Wire-haired Dachshunds. Together they form a lively band, keeping each other amused and active. I was hon treasurer of the Irish

Wolfhound Club of Ireland from 1969-2000, and a founder member, long time president and chairman of the Irish Wolfhound Club of Northern Ireland.

Marion and I became founder members of the IWHG in 2004. Since then, I have acted as secretary and latterly as chairman. As responsible breeders, health is a primary concern, both in our own kennel, and by extension in the breed worldwide.

We are approaching a time when research will be giving us the tools for reducing susceptibility to the prevalent, serious diseases in Wolfhounds, and for the



more effective treatments of these diseases. It is a good, and hopefully rewarding, time to be involved with the Group.

Gary Bogart

I have owned Irish Wolfhounds for almost four years, which is a very much the blink of an eye compared to everyone else on the Health Group. I have two wolfhounds, both boys, and I regularly attend shows. I don't judge and neither do I breed, but I do have a real passion for our breed and enjoy learning whatever I can about them.

I owe an incredible amount to Kathy Johnson and Dagmar Kenis Pordham for spending so much time helping me to understand our breed, and also to Ann Webb and Sorcha Wilde for all their encouragement.

I was very surprised, and delighted, to be invited to join the IWHG. I am proud to be a member. I consider myself to be the 'kennel boy' of the group, carrying out basic functions, working irregular hours and helping wherever I can.



Do wolfhounds have a small Genepool?

by Maura Lyons

It is often said that Irish Wolfhounds have a small genepool and I suppose, with only approximately 300 registrations each year in the UK maybe we do have a small genepool, but how do we measure it? How do we decide what is small and what is large? And how can we maintain enough genetic diversity within our genepool to ensure the healthy future of the Irish Wolfhound as a breed.

The genepool is comprised of all the genetic information which is available to the population. There is no doubt that we have a *limited* genepool, this is a consequence of having a closed stud book or registry, where only dogs whose parents are also registered in the stud book can themselves be registered. This limits which dogs are available for breeding. However, thanks to the new initiative IWDB (<http://iwdb.org/>) we now know there are at least 2800 Irish Wolfhounds born each year across the world. So in theory this means they are all available for breeding from. However, in reality breeders will choose only what they consider to be the best of a litter to breed on from, and this decision is based on whatever selection criteria is important to that breeder.

According to IWDB, the generation time for wolfhounds is 4 years, so of approximately 11,200 wolfhounds available over a 4-year timespan, the number who actually contributed to the next generation was 1400 sires and 2000 dams. This means that approximately 30% of wolfhounds born are contributing to the genepool. The true number is probably a slightly lower percentage, because IWDB does not include every single puppy born. Some registration systems rely on new puppy buyers to register their puppy and if the puppy has been bought as a family pet, rather than for showing or for breeding then often the puppy's registration will not be completed and it will not appear in IWDB. Another problem that IWDB has are the countries

who do not publish their registration data at all. So the data in IWDB is slightly biased in favour of those dogs that take part in breeding and showing because these dogs details are more likely to appear in the public domain.

What is a realistic proportion of the population to use to create the next generation? IWDB tells us that the average litter size is around 6 puppies. If we used every wolfhound available in our breeding programs then we would very quickly be suffering from a population explosion, so clearly this is not feasible. A very simple and



rough calculation would be: 2 wolfhounds make 6 puppies, ergo to maintain the population at a stable level we would require approximately 33% of available wolfhounds to go on to produce offspring, if each wolfhound only had one reproduction event. So I think from this evidence the wolfhounds and their breeders are not doing too badly for maximising the genetic potential of the next generation, though there is always room for improvement.

In September 2015 the UK Kennel Club published their major report into the genetic diversity of all 215 registered dog breeds.

They have used only the data available in their own database, going back to 1980 so it should be fairly complete for the UK, but will include imports that only come with a 3 generation pedigree. In it they recognise that inbreeding is inevitable in closed populations and state that "The rate of inbreeding in a population relates to the risk of detrimental effects associated with inbreeding (such as loss of genetic diversity, inbreeding depression and the spread of deleterious genetic variants). Therefore, the rate of inbreeding is a measure of the sustainability of a population." They conclude that managing the rate of inbreeding is essential

to keep an individual dog breed healthy. The Effective Population Size is directly related to the Rate of Inbreeding because it is measured as the number of breeding individuals needed in an idealised and randomly-mating population to achieve the same rate of inbreeding as is observed in the actual pure breed population. In this system, if a population has an effective population size of less than 50 it is considered to be at high risk of developing the detrimental effects of inbreeding. An effective population size of less than 100 breeding individuals will quickly lose genetic diversity, so it is not only desirable but

essential to monitor the effective population size, and ensure that it is well over 100 breeding individuals.

Of the 121 breeds who average more than 50 registrations per annum, Irish Wolfhounds are ranked 12th highest with an effective population size of 222 breeding individuals. The report states that during the 80s and the 90s the rate of inbreeding was highest, and that since 2000 the rate of inbreeding has decreased to such an extent that it is actually negative, implying an increase in genetic diversity. This could be due to the relaxation of the import laws, making it much easier for

foreign dogs to come into Britain and be used in breeding. So this may give a false impression of genetic health since the Kennel Club only records the 3 generation pedigree of imports and so imported individuals may appear may appear to be more unrelated from the 'native' population than they actually are.

Unfortunately, the KC report does not tell us how to use this information to guide our breeding strategies, so how do we turn this knowledge into practical advice?

There are some simple things we can do to ensure the increasing genetic diversity and therefore the genetic health of our Irish Wolfhound population. We can reduce even further the use of popular sires, currently we use about a third fewer males than females, difficult though it is we should be aiming to use the same number of males and females. Try to think outside the box a little and don't always opt for the popular show winning male as a mate choice for your girl. Also, for the larger kennels, don't just use the same sire on all the girls in your kennel simply

because he lives there and it is convenient to use him. According to the Kennel Club "Popular sires make large genetic contributions to subsequent generations and are the biggest influence on the rate of inbreeding." We can try and use more puppies from a litter to propagate the future generations; we can try and avoid having litters where there is unlikely to be any further propagation; we can research the coefficient of inbreeding of our proposed matings (use the trial mating feature on IWDB to show the COI over 10 generations) and try to keep it under the average for the breed; but also pay attention to the Ancestor Loss Coefficient, and try to ensure that the AVK is as high as we can make it. So many things to consider!

I think even taking account of the caution with which we interpret the above numbers, it appears that although the Irish Wolfhound does not have high registration numbers each year (and the yearly figures are falling) that Wolfhound breeders, for the most part, are making a determined effort to follow the simple guidelines associated with maintaining the genetic health of a population and ensure the viability of our

genepool for future generations. This does not mean we can become lackadaisical in our research, or stop paying attention to the finer detail. We should formulate our breeding strategies to maximise the potential for health and robust longevity, whilst still trying to follow the guidelines mentioned above. Then we can be fairly hopeful that not only will we maintain our breed into the future but we will improve it.

Resources used/cited.

<http://iwdb.org/research/> - I chose 'All Countries' and the time range 2011 - 2014

Kennel Club Population Analysis of the Irish Wolfhound Breed, Sept 2015.

Trends in Genetic Diversity of all Kennel Club Registered Pedigree Dog Breeds. Canine Genetics and Epidemiology. Tom Lewis et al, 2015.

Publishing Heart Test Results

When we updated our website, we made sure that we built a way for you to enter your Wolfhound's heart test results online.

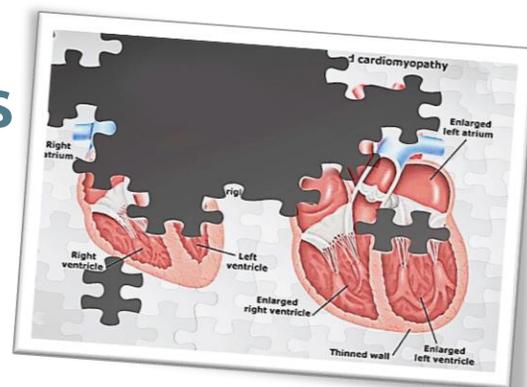
This new facility will add important data that everyone can access. The more results that are entered, the more we will be able to build up a picture of heart disease in Irish Wolfhounds.

It's open to all Wolfhounds that have undergone the full three-stage screening with a veterinary cardiologist, whether through our scheme or not. You can also

submit your results by post if you find it easier that way but, whichever way you choose, please send in your records.

We are beginning to receive results, but we need many more people to visit the site and enter their Wolfhound's heart test data.

You can enter information from any year you want and we would love to receive heart test results from previous years as well as this year.



This facility is for everyone to use, not just breeders or those who show their hounds.

Please enter your wolfhound's heart test results today

<http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/publication-of-results.html>

Funding

by **Maura Lyons**

The IWHG relies entirely on donations from our wonderful supporters. Fundraising events take many forms and over the years there have been some really outstanding ideas, raising rather outstanding amounts, but in this newsletter we want to celebrate the 'every little helps' methods.



When we got our new logo from Anne Birgitte-Larson we knew it would make a great new wraparound for our **Loose Change Challenge** tins. The Loose Change Challenge

was the brainchild of Jean Timmins and she still helps out with these. Recently, Jill Stayte donated another 50 tins for our stock and Jean gave them all a facelift using our new logo as the basis for her designs. If you want to join in, the concept is simple, we give you a tin and you put any loose change into it – then when it's full you hand it back in and get an enormous sense of satisfaction knowing you have helped research into the health issues that affect our lovely breed. Wendy Heather is now coordinating sending empty tins out and collecting full tins in. So please get in touch with her to organise getting your hands on one of our lovely new tins. Her email address is wychwoodgrooming@btinternet.com or you can find her on Facebook.

This initiative was started in 2013 and to date we have raised £3,377! This is a fantastic amount considering how easy it is to do, and everyone can join in.

The other initiative we have is using **Easyfundraising** to do your online shopping. This is a really neat idea because it doesn't cost you even a penny! Simply register with Easyfundraising and remember to click through their website when you do your online shopping.

Use this link to read all about it and then sign up to support the IWHG <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/iwhg>

We share advice about the best places to shop on our FB Group so keep an eye on it to find out who gives the biggest percentage donation. We have a couple of members who have raised staggering totals. Dot Morris has raised over £1000,



and Helen Ward has raised over £500!! I don't do that much online shopping but even I've raised over £120, and it didn't cost me a penny. Many of the big name online retailers are included and some lesser known ones too, you can even get your weekly grocery shopping through Easyfundraising and earn a donation for IWHG every time.

These small amounts really do add up, we started using Easyfundraising in 2014 and have already raised £3,890 to date! It's really amazing! We'd love it if you helped us to 'look after the pennies' and then the pounds can look after themselves.



The Irish Wolfhound Rescue Trust was formed in 1967 by a group of responsible breeders, who realised there was a need to offer assistance to such owners. The organisation is based in mainland UK and offers its service to hounds and owners resident in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

We aim to provide loving homes for Wolfhounds whose owners can no longer keep them. The Trust is always grateful to hear from those willing to offer homes and help. Obviously rescued hounds cannot be

supplied to order and searching enquiries have to be made to ensure that the new home is suitable.

We are always happy to hear from potential rescue owners. We do not operate a 'first come, first served'

system but try to ensure that each hound is placed in a home most suitable to his or her individual circumstances.

For more information, please click on the link and visit our website

<http://www.irishwolfhoundrescue.co.uk/index.html>



The IWHG Logo

by Anne Birgitte-Larsen

Thank you IWHG for entrusting me to make a new logo for the future of the Health Group. It was a true honour to be asked.

The IWHG had a clear vision of what they wanted their new look and identity to communicate. From the briefs we had I understood the group wanted something simple, yet instantly recognizable as health related to Irish Wolfhounds.

For me it was important to avoid the stereotypical green colours and shamrocks of Ireland. I wanted to create something more modern and simplistic, but also a logo which reflects the Irish Wolfhound. I wanted to show the strong and beautiful dog doing what it's bred to do, so the concept of a strong running dog I felt related strongly to both the IWHG's identity and their goals.

So I came up with this abstract but rough stroked image of an Irish Wolfhound on the chase, and then later combined it with the double helix of our DNA to show off the real mission of the IWHG; to promote health and fitness of our breed long into the future.

It was also essential that the new logo would work on several different platforms and be scalable from miniature icons up to car decorations. The logo's elements can thus be taken apart and still be a visual symbol of IWHG without all elements of the main logo.



Colour is also an essential part of the logo process. We ended up with a dark oil blue colour and black (grey), so it will not be too expensive to print (2 colors) and work well in small and large sizes alike. The logo will also work when black or variations of grey are the only option.

I hope this logo will live for a long time and be a symbol of the hard and important work, the goals, vision and values of the IWHG.

We are absolutely delighted with the logo that Anne has designed for us. The running hound captures the spirit and vitality of our hounds and the helix perfectly represents the research and scientific endeavors of the IWHG. We love the use of St Patrick's Blue as our colour and very much appreciate the thought that Anne- Birgette has put into designing different versions of the logo that will work on banners, letterheads, tablecloths and badges.

Another development that we are excited about is the trialling of the new logo on our own range of exclusive merchandise. We already have bags and polo shirts available

The bags are very smart, strong and stylish

They are made from 100% organic cotton and are ideal for carrying all your items to dog shows. We are looking to extend our range to include a wide variety of attractive and practical items.

We have teamed up with Mandy Addington, who is working closely with us and who has very kindly agreed to take care of the orders and printing. Thank you, Mandy.

To order one of our products, please visit

<https://www.facebook.com/irishwolfhoundmerchandise/?ref=nf>



or contact Mandy through Facebook.

All profits from these items go directly to support the Irish Wolfhound Health Group.

Do Irish Wolfhounds Die Young?

by **Miranda Brace**

Following a chance remark in a recent TV programme there has been quite a lot of discussion about the supposedly short life expectancy of the Wolfhound. This is largely a myth. Many Wolfhounds live to a good age and one should never take an "average" age as the maximum age to which a dog can live. A lot of the statistics which give rise to the notion that they all die young come from insurance companies and vets. No account is taken of the dogs who live a long healthy life, never seeing a vet after their puppy vaccinations, are not insured and who die a peaceful death in their sleep at twelve plus.

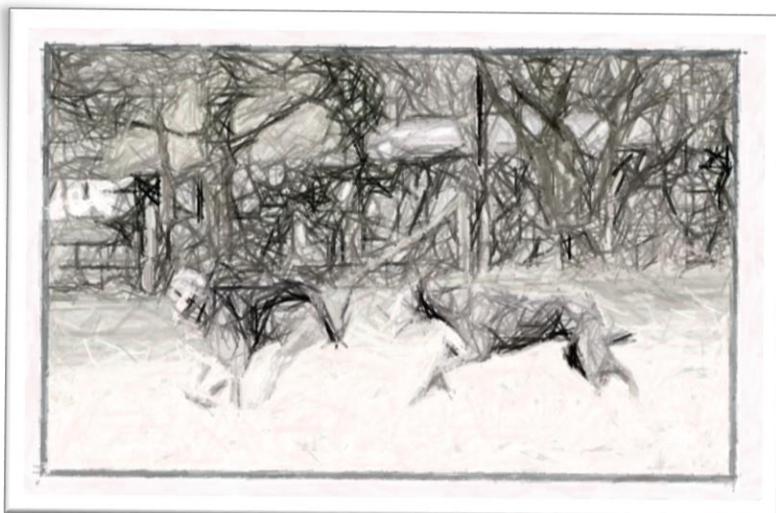
An average is the median figure so, for every dog that dies at six and a half, there are more who sadly die young and an equal number who live very much longer. Early deaths can be from an accident or from a disease not related to any of the big three killers of the breed - and many other breeds as well. These early deaths will pull the average down through no fault of the breeder and cannot be legislated for but contribute to the myth of a short lived breed.

A recent massive study in the States, covering 20,000 dogs of many breeds has come up with the interesting fact that Wolfhounds and Labradors have very much the same average but Labs do not suffer from the same stigma.

We need to celebrate our elder statesmen in the breed by publicising them as much as possible I will start the process by saying we have had many dogs who have got to ten and eleven, the oldest one we had here was a rescued bitch who lived to thirteen and a half and the oldest one we bred was fourteen and a half when he died peacefully in his sleep by the fire.

Nowadays we have the regional heart testing scheme, which means that any incipient problem can be picked up early and the dog

then has the chance of living a normal life as modern drugs are so good at regulating heart problems. We seldom have to suffer the heartbreak of an apparently fit and healthy dog suddenly dropping dead. The other two main killers of the breed, GDV and osteosarcoma, are still a problem but there is so much information published about GDV,



how to try to avoid it and what to do if it happens, that dogs have a much better chance of surviving the surgery than they did years ago. Surgical protocols are now much advanced as well. Osteosarcoma is being researched across the world for our breed and we do urge everyone who has, or has had, a dog affected by this, to take part in our surveys.

Sadly, all breeds get cancer. Most breeds have a particular form that they are prone to, we are definitely not alone. The other thing to remember is that heart disease and cancer are the two biggest killers of human beings and there is no more randomly bred species on the planet than homo sapiens, some of whom die young and some live way past their three score years and ten. Nobody has yet said that, as a breed, we die young.

Lastly, remember that keeping your dog at his correct weight, well-muscled, well exercised and given an appropriate diet, will keep him with you much longer than cosseting him, not letting him gallop, allowing him to get soft and flabby and sinking into premature old age.

Whilst this may seem overoptimistic to some this is just my view, based on many years of experience.

Help!

Sharing your information with us would be very much appreciated and would greatly assist our research into longevity in Irish Wolfhounds. Please support us by visiting our website and contributing to our studies.

Veteran Study:

<http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/veteran-study.html>

Longevity Study:

<http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/longevity-study.html>

Regional Heart Testing Scheme

by **Wendy Heather**

The Irish Wolfhound regional heart testing scheme was put into place to research the genetics behind heart disease in Irish Wolfhounds, in particular AF (Atrial Fibrillation) and DCM (Dilated Cardiomyopathy). Over the years it has grown from humble beginnings and in 2015 a total of 266 Irish Wolfhounds were tested through the scheme at 21 different venues across the UK & Ireland. The scheme is currently supported by 3 dedicated cardiologists, Dr Serena Sykes, Dr Angela Bodey and Dr Sheena Milne, all of whom give up their time to aid with this research. More recently we have been delighted to work with Nottingham University in furthering our knowledge of heart disease by submitting cheek swabs. In order to organise and run this scheme a coordinator has the task of liaising with cardiologists, venue's and hosts of those venues. Planners are compiled for each individual session which sets out appointment times, the coordinator's role is that of administration but is also the person who has the most contact with people booking into sessions.

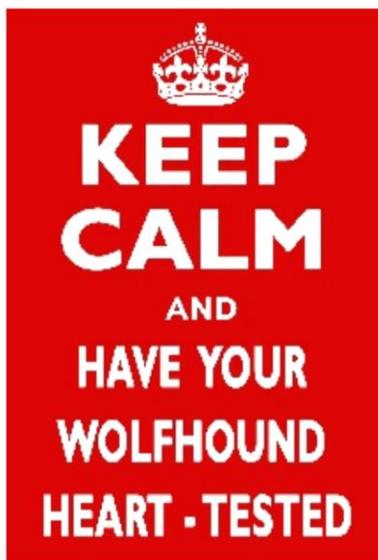
What is involved?

The test is non-intrusive and takes roughly half an hour to be completed, although every hound is an individual and some take less or slightly more time based on their behaviour. Firstly, a stethoscope examination is undertaken to listen to the heart and check for any abnormal noises linked with blood flow, this could be when a heart murmur is first identified. The second part is an ECG (Electrocardiogram), this will build a picture of the electrical activity of the heart. Spikes and dips are called waves and show the heart's rhythm, this helps the cardiologist to identify signs of abnormality associated with heart rhythm and rate such as AF. The final and most eye opening part of the test is an ultrasound scan, which surprisingly does not require sedation and can be completed without shaving the hair of the hound. The ultrasound scan shows images of the heart, this means that the cardiologist can identify if the heart is enlarged or shows any other abnormal signs, this is usually where DCM can be diagnosed.

A form is completed which details the findings of the examinations and 2 copies are given to the owner, one for themselves and a second to take to their own veterinary practice. The cardiologist will also take the third copy and a fourth copy is given to the research team, in our case Dr Serena Brownlie.

What is the cost?

The cost for this is £45 and hounds aged 8 years and over are subsidised to assist in gathering further research in our veterans. The Irish Wolfhound Rescue Trust have also agreed to cover the cost of the heart test for any hounds that are placed through the Irish Wolfhound Rescue Trust. In comparison to an external veterinarian £45 is a far smaller amount than would be charged to an owner who wished to undertake these tests privately. This is due in kind to our cardiologists who are not only giving up their personal time but also reduce their fees to the Irish Wolfhound Health Group for these sessions.



Who is it for?

The simple answer is EVERY IRISH WOLFHOUND. You do not need to be involved in showing or breeding to book your hound an appointment. You do not need to

have been referred from a veterinary practice and more importantly your hound does not need to be ill.

How often and when should I test?

It is recommended that all breeding stock are heart tested annually, the first test usually being at around 18 months of age. There have been cases where, at the cardiologists discretion, tests are carried out earlier than 18 months of age. Annual tests of all Irish Wolfhounds are recommended for those who show no abnormalities, more frequent appointments may be needed such as twice a year if there are abnormalities. If more frequent tests are required, the cardiologist will identify this on the day of the examination and provide you with clear reason as to why it is recommended. In some cases, a few owners opt to test twice a year or more even if there are no abnormalities. This is down to individual choice and it does no harm in keeping an eye on the heart and can be beneficial, especially as hounds become older or may have a parents or siblings with diagnosed heart conditions.

Publishing results

Examinations and the results are confidential; however, it is now possible to make your result available for others to view. The Irish Wolfhound Health Group has set up a system to allow you to publish your heart testing results, these can be uploaded or posted to the Group. This allows everyone to view your results, it is optional and not compulsory. Confidentiality is still maintained during all examinations and it is the choice of the owner if they wish to publish the results.

The Irish Wolfhound heart testing scheme has given us the opportunity to identify abnormalities of the heart before it is too late that medication would have no effect. By regularly testing our hounds we ensure that we are able to check for changes and also further our research and understanding of heart disease. The scheme is there for everyone and can only continue to exist if we keep using it. Occasionally Irish Wolfhounds are referred to as our 'heart hounds', let us help you to look after the 'heart of your heart hound'.


Find us on facebook
 Irish Wolfhound Health Group

Join the discussion

We'd love to hear your feedback on any of the articles or information in this newsletter.

Do you think Wolfhounds have short lives?

Is there anything you would add to Miranda's article on longevity?
 Or something you disagree with? Or would like clarified?



Is there a small genepool in Wolfhounds?

Does genetic diversity matter?
 Is there anything you would like to ask Maura?



What do you think of the Regional Heart Testing Scheme?

What stops owners having their hounds heart tested each year?
 The cost? Fear? Apathy?
 Let us know your thoughts on Wendy's article



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/IWhealthgroup/>