



# IWHG



## Newsletter

# September 2018

PATRON: TRUDIE SUMNER

## Welcome

...to this Late Summer/Early Autumn edition.

As it's been a while since our Spring edition we decided to combine the Summer and Autumn issues into one bumper issue. There's lots of news and interesting articles and plenty of opportunities for you all to contribute directly to our work.

We have to begin by announcing that Linda Forret, who has served as our very efficient and capable Secretary over the last few years, has decided to step down from the Group. Linda is going to be much missed and we're very, very sorry to lose her, but as with so many volunteers, sometimes it's hard to juggle the demands of work and personal life with the very busy demands of voluntary work – and of course, Linda is now a grandmother with additional calls on her very precious spare time. We would like to thank Linda for all her support, commitment and hard

work for the Group and we hope that as her work/life balance eases, she'll reconsider joining us again. We'll miss you, Linda.

**The role of Secretary** has now been taken on by Dr Maura Lyons, well known to many of you already as our Research Co-ordinator. Maura remains in that post and will be running both jobs in tandem.



To help spread the workload, we are delighted to be able to welcome back two former members of the Group, Jean Timmins and Caroline Sheppard!

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### Articles in this issue

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Jean has now handed over the reins as [Irish Wolfhound Rescue Secretary](#) and although she remains a Trustee, she is now able to concentrate more of her time on health issues. Jean will be resuming lead responsibility for **Livershunt Projects** and will also be working closely with Miranda Brace on driving our **Pneumonia Study**.

Caroline resumes her study into **Dentition** and also her **Longevity Study** and will also take on responsibility for the **Longevity Recognition Programme**. Importantly, Caroline will also be



project lead on **FCE/Puppy Paralysis**, which is a natural fit with her experience and knowledge of orthopaedic conditions and also her work with [PAWS](#).

Staying with the subject of new appointments, in our last issue, we were explaining the need for the breed to appoint a KC Breed Education Co-ordinator. We are pleased to report that there were several applications and following careful consideration, the combined breed bodies appointed

Mrs. Sue Cole. Sue is a breeder and exhibitor of long-standing and is now also Chairman of the Irish Wolfhound Club, a brief introduction to Sue can be found [here](#). We wish Sue every success.

The **KC's Breed Health & Conservation Plans (BHCPs)** are progressing and the Irish Wolfhound's Plan is due for completion in this second round. This is a project that is being coordinated by the Breed's Breed Health Co-ordinator (BHC), Rebecca Peek, and is a collaborative process between the KC, the breed bodies and the IWHG.

We will have our **first combined meeting with the KC in early October** and for that, they and we will be providing data on the health of the breed. The KC will be referring back to their breed specific surveys in 2004 and 2014, which had a very poor number of responses, and so were not as robust as they would have liked.

To counter this and to provide as up to date information on the breed's health as possible, the IWHG has launched a [Breed Health Survey](#) and also a Breeder's Survey. These will give us information that is more significant and accurate. So far we've had a great response, but if you haven't filled in a survey yet you only have until **midnight on 21<sup>st</sup> September**.

This survey is UK specific, but we hope to be calling on the global Wolfhound community at the beginning of October, as we will be doing a drive to relaunch the **Pneumonia Study**. More information can be found [here](#).

There's an exciting update on the **Regional Heart Testing Scheme** from Wendy Heather, introducing some new faces who have joined the [cardiology team](#).

Miranda Brace has written an explanation of [Startle Disease](#) – earlier in the year there was concern that this disease had been published on a popular puppy sales website as if it were a common condition in the breed. It is known of in the breed, but as Miranda explains, it is very, very rare.

Please take a look at the Dates for Your Diary Section [here](#).

Tickets for the KC's Breed Health Co-ordinator's **Annual Health Symposium** are now open to purchase, and the next long-awaited **Nottingham Veterinary School Breed Day** is set for next February.

We'd like to thank everyone for their contributions and permissions to reprint articles and look forward to hearing updates from them again in the future.

As always, we're keen to hear from you, so if you have any topics that you'd like us to include in future issues, let us know.



# New Breed Education Co-ordinator

by **Sue Cole**

I fell in love with our breed in 1976 when I saw my first Irish Wolfhound, a seemingly gigantic shaggy beast, dragging some poor soul around the village.

Years of longing and hanging round the benches at shows followed until I was eventually in a position to have my own Wolfhound in 1986. The first Culkeeran litter arrived in 1991 and subsequent litters arrived only when I wanted a puppy to follow on with. Showing has been a big part of my life and there have been several Culkeeran champions, not only those owned by myself but also those owned by friends in the breed.

I was lucky to befriend the late Peta Innes of the 'Petasmade' IWs in my early years in the breed and together we formed the 'Wolfhounds' group, a social gathering of wolfhound folk, both

pet and show, keen to learn about all aspects of the breed including history, health matters, showing and general rearing.

This was an invaluable learning curve for me and helped me



enormously with my breeding plans and laid the foundation of my judging career.

I started judging in the early 1990's at open shows and first awarded CCs in the breed in 2005. Since then I have had the privilege to judge not only the Irish Wolfhound Society Championship Show but also Specialties in Belgium, France, Denmark, USA,

Canada, Finland and at the World Dog Show also held in Finland.

I also have the pleasure of giving CCs in Grand Bassets Griffon Vendéen.

I have previously served on both Irish Wolfhound Breed Club Committees, also as an Assistant Rescue Secretary and am currently Chairman of the Irish Wolfhound Club and President of the Hound Club of East Anglia.

The new judging system brings challenges with it and the development of good breed judges is vital to the progression of the breed.

I look forward to working closely with the breed bodies to establish a solid base from which aspiring and active judges of Irish Wolfhounds can progress.

You can find more info on the new Judges Competency Framework (JFC) here

[irishwolfhoundclub.org.uk/judges-comp.-framework.html](http://irishwolfhoundclub.org.uk/judges-comp.-framework.html)

*Sue Cole*

# IWHG Breed Health Survey 2018

The UK Kennel Club is developing Breed Health and Conservation Plans (BHCPs) for all registered dog breeds to ensure that health concerns are identified through evidence-based criteria, so that breeders will have useful information and resources to support them in making balanced breeding decisions in the future.

Irish Wolfhounds are in the next round of breeds required to produce a plan with the KC so we are inviting all owners of UK Irish Wolfhounds, whether

or not registered, to complete this simple survey, to provide the KC with an up to date and accurate snapshot of the breed's current health status.

**The survey is anonymous** and your answers, along with other sources of scientific evidence, will provide important data for our BHCP.

The first section is about dogs that are alive and that you currently own, the second section refers to any dogs that you have owned that have died in the last 10 years.

**For Breeders**, in addition to completing this survey, there is also a separate additional survey specifically about your breeding experiences.

You can take part in the owners' survey [here](#) and in the breeders' survey [here](#).

You can read more about the Kennel Club's Breed Health and Conservation Plan project by clicking [here](#).

## Please participate

**THIS SURVEY CLOSSES AT MIDNIGHT ON  
FRIDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER**

# Irish Wolfhound research - Where transparency and collaboration are pivotal

by **Pernille Monberg and Per Arne Flatberg**

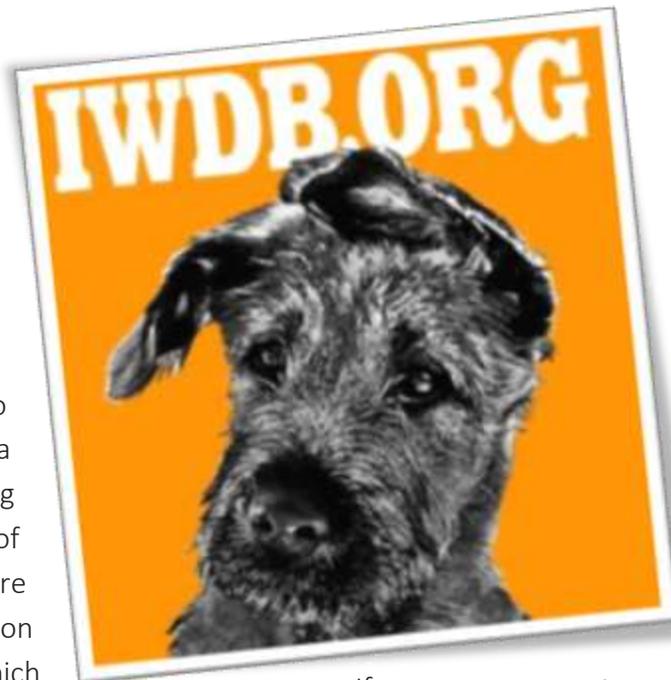
We would like to show you why we, **The Irish Wolfhound Database (IWDB)** and the **Irish Wolfhound Longevity Study (IWLS)** find it extremely important to collect data on Wolfhounds.

IWDB is aiming at collecting data to document the breed in its entirety (or as close to this as possible), and subsequently give the community access to pedigrees, which are a valuable part of breeding choices. A number of owners and breeders are also submitting data on health and lifespan, which can be accessed by the users of the database. In addition, the IWDB team and IWLS are collecting longevity data from a number of open sources.

The IWDB is a dynamic entity, with an ever-growing volume of data and new functions.

The inevitable mistakes in the entered data are continuously corrected as soon as they are

brought to the attention of IWDB's admin-team by the users.



If you go to <http://info.iwdb.org/> you will learn how to use the database and which functions are available to the users. It is important to note that the value of research depends on how it is interpreted and applied. Even well founded and presented research can be misused in the wrong hands.

Animosities have always existed between breeders, if some choose

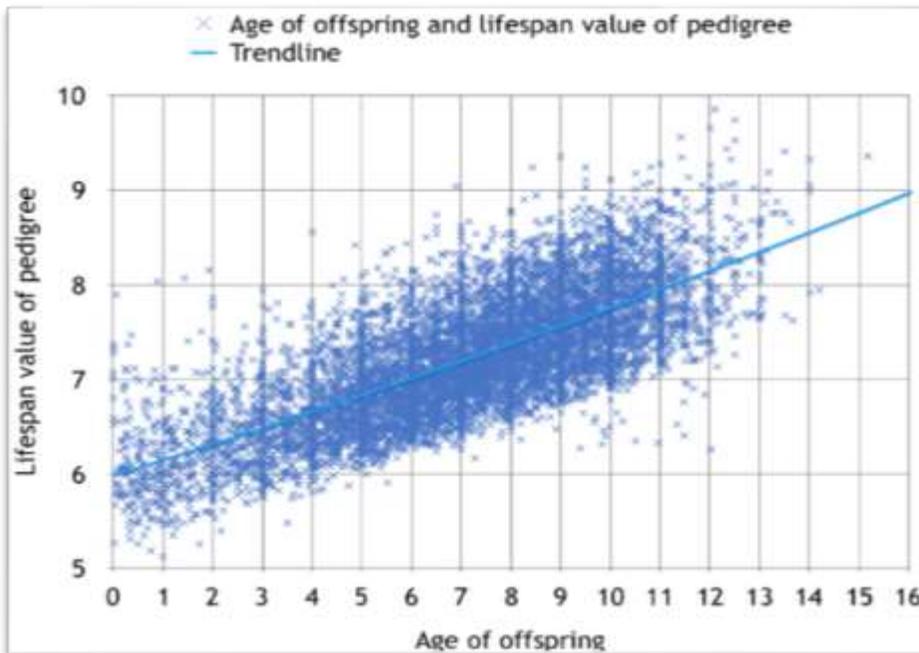
to use the public database with malintent or to chastise others, it is not surprising but still unfortunate; IWDB was not created for this purpose. Fortunately, negative use of the database is scarce, and the impact is not serious enough to warrant not having this tool at our disposal.

In its very short life, IWDB has had more than 183,000 visits, where each visitor has viewed an average of 6 pages. There are approximately 40,000 pedigrees viewed every month, which shows a significant interest from the Irish Wolfhound community.

In the **Irish Wolfhound Longevity Study (IWLS)**, the primary focus on data collection is for population studies. Data for the IWLS have been partly harvested from public sources; however, the majority of data originates from the generous contributions by owners and breeders. This data is not available to the public, unless the owner or breeder chooses to share said

data with IWDB. The IWLS is about documenting the status quo of the breed.

Once baselines have been established, it will reveal how the breed fares, mean average lifespan for the breed or for specific groups within the data mass. We look at causes of death in the dogs, patterns of inheritance and subsequently it will be easier to point out applicable methods for improving flaws or weaknesses, or perhaps maintaining or consolidating virtues. It may sound ambitious, but the data will be part of a wide spectrum of works in progress.



This graph shows how longevity in a pedigree affects the longevity of offspring. The trend line shows the

correlation between lifespan value in pedigree and experienced longevity in progeny.

Each dog has a little X plotting its age at time of death on the horizontal axes and the lifespan value of its ancestors on the vertical axes.

The lifespan-value of ancestors (the vertical scale) is a weighted calculation of direct ancestor lifespan in the last five generations. We are still working on improving the algorithms used for this crucial calculation.

This is to give an example of what IWDB and IWLS are collaborating

on. It is another work in progress. The aim is to provide applicable tools for the calculations of

inherent robustness and longevity in planned litters. However, we are pretty excited to see the emerging pattern of plots, which clearly show, that the higher the age of ancestors, the greater the chance of the resulting progeny reaching similar ages. In other words, there is a significant inherited component in the potential for longevity.

## How can you help?

Every hound is important for this longevity research. The Irish Wolfhound Longevity Study (IWLS) are one of the scientific research partners who get access to The Irish Wolfhound Database (IWDB). All updates in [iwdb.org](http://iwdb.org) are transferred to IWLS, while **the IWLS-data remains private.**

If you'd like to contribute by sharing longevity-data publicly, please use any of the tools available on [iwdb.org](http://iwdb.org) or email the project group at [info@iwdb.org](mailto:info@iwdb.org). If you would like to contribute longevity-data, but want to keep the data private, please email information to **Pernille Monberg:** [wolfhouse@post.tele.dk](mailto:wolfhouse@post.tele.dk)

# Regional Heart Testing Scheme - Mid-Year Review

by **Wendy Heather**

Heart testing for 2018 is now fully underway and with 11 sessions completed we are half



Dave Fisher

way through the sessions for the year.

The Beast from the East sadly affected the attendance levels at the first 3 sessions, however with careful planning we were still able to run these sessions and only a few booked attendees were transferred to other sessions during the year. Thank you to everyone who made these sessions possible and who managed to get there.

For 2018 we are delighted to welcome on board a new cardiologist, **Dave Fisher**, BVetMed CertSAC CertSAM MRCVS, RCVS Advanced

Practitioner in Small Animal Cardiology and Small Animal Medicine. Dave set up Brentknoll Veterinary Centre in Worcester in 1993, where he is Clinical Director and Head Vet and he has also done a vast amount of work into heart disease in the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel.

In addition to Dave, we welcome

back Irish Wolfhound cardiologist **Susan L Roberts**, BVMS CertVC MRCVS RCVS, of SLR Cardiology Referrals, who was one of our original cardiologists working alongside Serena Brownlie-Sykes when the regional heart testing scheme was in its infancy.

Sue is also an Advanced Practitioner in Veterinary cardiology and in the time she's been away, she has conducted further postgraduate research with a special focus on heart disease in donkeys and in 2016 co-authored and published two leading papers on the subject.

As always, we can't thank all our cardiologists enough for giving up their time to continue to allow us to run this scheme.

The **online publication of heart test results** remains open to all who wish to submit their results details can be found on the website.

[www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/publication-of-results.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/publication-of-results.html)



Sue Roberts

Anne Vaudin remains in charge of heart test bookings and there are still some spaces remaining for 2018, please check the website for full details.

[www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/dates-and-locations-.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/dates-and-locations-.html)

# Pneumonia Study Relaunch October 2018

by **Maura Lyons (Research Co-ordinator)**

During a recent meeting between Angela Bodey and the IWHG, the pneumonia project was discussed and although Angela is extremely busy, (not least with our IWHG Regional Heart Testing Scheme), she is also very keen to progress this study.

Some surveys have been returned since her last update but Angela feels that anecdotally the condition is much more prevalent within the breed than the numbers of surveys returned would indicate.

There is also the problem that a study conducted with a small sample size is not considered to be definitive. To date Angela has been unable to recommend a specific treatment protocol through lack of overwhelming evidence that one treatment is significantly better than the others. To rectify this situation, we need a lot more case studies submitted.

In order to facilitate this the IWHG have converted the Pneumonia survey into an online form so it is even easier and more convenient to fill in. Angela has cleared some time in her schedule early next

year for analysing any data we can collect.

Please, if any of your hounds have experienced pneumonia or any kind of respiratory disease, rhinitis, or snotty nose, please find the time to complete the survey found [here](#).

(a paper version is also available)

**So, now it is down to YOU.**

Although we will continue to collect submissions, for Angela to get a good number to analyse we would appreciate if you could enter your case studies before the end of December 2018

**This survey is global and is open to all Irish Wolfhound owners worldwide.**

If you want to find out more about pneumonia or download the pneumonia guidelines, read our information page here and follow progress on the study.

[www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/pneumonia.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/pneumonia.html)

The photograph shows a wolfhound in typical pneumonia stance with head lowered and neck extended.



# Low Level (Cold) Laser Therapy

by Sue Bevis

Although laser therapy has been available for many years, evidence to support its use for alleviating pain and accelerating healing has only recently emerged.

Low energy light impulses in the red or infrared spectrum can be employed to stimulate disturbed metabolic processes on a cellular level in such a way that the affected cells and tissues can operate optimally again. This promotes the long-term regeneration of many different



'William' with Olivia

kinds of diseased/injured tissues and without the risk of side effects. Contrary to high-level or surgical lasers, these types of lasers cannot burn or harm tissue.

The laser is applied either directly to the surface of the skin or just above. It is not generally necessary to sedate your animal, nor to shave the area. The laser can be set for shallow or deep tissue penetration for different time periods of treatment depending upon the condition that is being treated. The animal and humans in the room during treatment will wear goggles to protect their retinas.

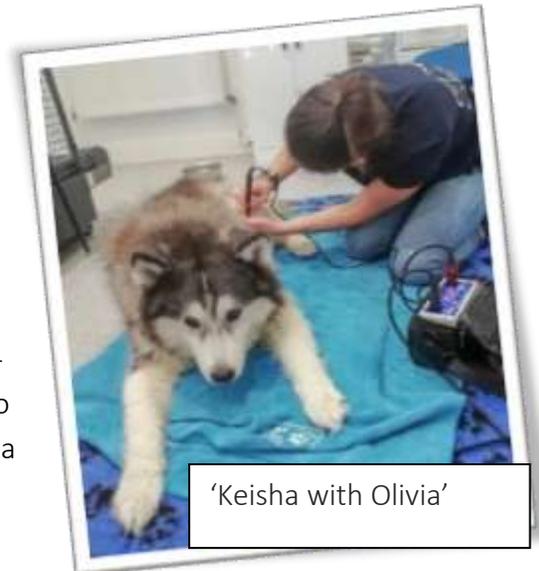
Cold Laser Therapy can be beneficial in several different ways:

- In reducing inflammation - it causes capillary vasodilation, increases lymph drainage, and reduces pro-inflammatory mediators, so inflammation, erythema, oedema and bruising all reduce.

- In accelerating tissue repair and reducing pain - photons increase vascular activity which speeds wound closure. It also causes suppression of nociceptors and increases the release of endorphins which both help to reduce pain. It accelerates cell growth and enables cells to take on more nutrients, again

increasing the speed of wound closure.

- In accelerating the healing and treatment of infection – immunoglobulins and lymphocytes are stimulated and it also activates ATP (adenosine triphosphate) which is a major player in cell energy. Fibroblasts are also stimulated which produces collagen.



'Keisha with Olivia'

There are a huge range of uses, some of which are as follows:

- Surgical wounds
- Gingivitis
- Osteoarthritis
- Chronic wounds such as lick granulomas

- Post-surgical pain/discomfort
- Muscle/tendon/ligament strains/sprains and injuries
- Spinal injuries
- Cellulitis
- Ear infections
- Bladder infections
- Hot spots
- Degenerative disc disease
- Anal gland infections
- Haematomas
- Bone fractures

In Irish Wolfhounds, of particular interest may be in the treatment of bursas (hygromas), and tail injuries.

Whilst beneficial in so many areas, it should not be used in patients with neoplasia (tumours), and

definitely not on a neoplastic area – applying the laser over a tumour site could accelerate the tumour growth. Nor should it be used over a pregnant uterus, or over the thyroid gland or the ovaries/testicles.

However, it is OK to use on growing animals.

The length of each treatment and the course of treatment will depend upon the condition.

You should contact your own insurance company to discuss recovering the cost of treatment.

Some larger veterinary practices now have their own lasers, as do many referral and specialist veterinary centres. You can also check out members of ACPAT – the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy and see if someone near you has a laser. This would require referral from your own vet.

All in all, this is a very exciting tool in the veterinary surgeon's armoury, and can only be beneficial to our pet's wellbeing.

**Disclaimer** – I am not a vet, nor do I have any veterinary training. If you think that Cold Laser therapy could help your dog, please contact your vet.

#### Sources:

- Emma Owen – BVM&S, MRCVS, Seadown Veterinary Services
- VetCura Therapeutic Technologies
- PetMD
- Paz Veterinary
- The Drake Center

Photographs of William and Keisha provided by Kate Parsons of Footfalls. Thank you to the owners for giving their permission for us to use.

## Owners' experience by Adele and Kevin Campbell- Woodford

“Our young Irish Wolfhound, Innis, damaged his tail and was being treated at our vet's. The initial wound on Innis's tail started to heal but his body started to reject the antibiotics and, with his allergies, this resulted in him having to have most of his tail amputated.

Following the partial amputation, Innis's was not responding to the treatment and we were very concerned. Innis's body was rejecting all treatments from the vet and E. Coli was present causing the tissue to die. Our vet thought that cold laser treatment might help and referred us to Kate Parsons, one of the

physiotherapists at Footfalls Clinic.

Innis took to Kate straight away and Kate began treating his tail wound with the laser at settings that, in her experience, would at least give him a chance of healing his wound.

/continued ...

Innis's began to respond to the laser treatment and he attended eight treatments over a number of weeks - the skin healed, the



wound closed and the hair grew back without any need for further intervention from the vet.

Innis is in super shape now and his tail has healed wonderfully.

Adele and I are 100% sure that if Innis had not seen Kate at Footfalls and had the laser treatment, he would not be here today.

Ultimately, the treatment saved his life."



## A therapist's experience by Kate Parsons MSCP ACPAT Cat A RCH Dip

Kate is the practitioner who treated Innis. We asked her how she uses low-level laser treatment.

Kate told us, "I have been using Laser Therapy for five and a half years at FootFalls.

We use laser predominantly for

- arthritis
- bursas
- post and pre-operation pain
- bone healing
- fracture healing inflammation
- wound care.

We see great success with all our patients treated and mostly use it in combination with some of our other therapies such as

hydrotherapy and detailed and individualised home exercise



programmes."

Kate is an experienced human physiotherapist, having qualified in 2009. After spending time working in various hospitals in Africa, Kate returned to the UK and became interested in transferring her skills to the animal world.

In 2013, Kate qualified as a Veterinary Physiotherapist and Hydrotherapist and in 2014 launched a small physiotherapy clinic in Essex.

She is a member of Health Professionals Council; CSP; ACPAT; IRVAP and NARCH.

She completed her Veterinary Physiotherapy training in 2013 and the idea of a private physiotherapy clinic for small animals started to take shape.

Details of Footfalls services can be found [here](#).

# Measuring Genetic Diversity in Irish Wolfhounds

by **Maura Lyons**

A while ago I became aware of a project run by UC Davis assessing genetic diversity in Standard Poodles, and calling for other breeds that were interested to get in touch.

[www.vgl.ucdavis.edu/services/dog/GeneticDiversityEnrollment.php](http://www.vgl.ucdavis.edu/services/dog/GeneticDiversityEnrollment.php)

This is something that I personally find interesting. I don't suppose with my background that's too much of a surprise. Some of you might even recall I organised a block-booking and discount price with the MyDogDNA testing kit a few years ago.

<https://mydogdna.com/>

MyDogDNA test results include some health traits (none relevant for wolfhounds), colour and other phenotype traits, and also a measure of genetic diversity.

However, some time passed before I made formal enquiries for Irish Wolfhounds with regard to attempting to help recruit enough like-minded people to allow UC Davis to establish an IW genetic diversity test.

When they are creating the baseline for any new breed they need over 100 samples from as diverse a range of dogs within that breed as possible. The aim there is to get a sample from every different 'allele' available within the population, so that

assessments can be made about which alleles are rare and which are common within the breed. This should then allow the scientists to calculate the actual diversity within the breed.

**The UC Davis test** gives a results certificate like the example on the following page.

They give your dog an Internal Relatedness score, and use around 33 markers to create a genetic fingerprint for each dog. One interesting aspect of the UC Davis test is that they also look at markers within the DLA, part of the immune system. A genetically diverse immune system is more likely to be a robust immune system, capable of fighting any diseases that challenge it.

**Once the scientists have done that they will offer the test for sale at \$80 to anyone wanting to get their Irish Wolfhound tested for genetic diversity.**

To encourage uptake whilst the development stage is ongoing the cost for the test is reduced to \$50, but until they get enough participants the results are not released to the owners.

It is generally accepted that we, as breeders, should be attempting to preserve what diversity we have left within our breeds. Closed stud books; the popularity of line-

breeding; the overuse of popular sires; and depletion of breeding stock caused by war have all contributed to low levels of genetic diversity within many KC recognised dog breeds.

Low genetic diversity and high levels of in-breeding have been linked to **lower fertility, lower fecundity, and higher levels of hereditary genetic disease**. So, it's obvious that we need to firstly know what our genetic diversity is and how we can maintain and, ideally, increase it.

Recently, I found out that the breed organisers for the original **Standard Poodle project** have created software that uses the results from the UC Davis test panel to create useful tools for breeders to guide their breeding choices towards improving genetic diversity in their lines, they sell this breeding management tool under the name **BetterBred**. [www.betterbred.com/](http://www.betterbred.com/)

If you sign up your dogs to the UC Davis test through the BetterBred website, you get access to these handy breeding tools. There are different membership levels, but they do start with a free version, so you can choose the level that is most appropriate for your needs.

Their breeding management software shows you what your own

dogs various genetic diversity values are and compares them to the breed average so you can see if you are breeding from your dog, which direction you should be trying to push those values. These

litter, even though we know that the litter siblings are not genetically identical.

With the BetterBred tools the *Litter Prediction* gives you a range of

As breeders this will give us another tool in our arsenal. When considering breeding choices, or which puppy to keep from a litter, we can consider type, conformation, temperament,

**BetterBred**

This test was developed by world renowned veterinarian researcher, Dr. Niels Pedersen, to equip breeders to maintain their breed's diversity.

This is the inbreeding measurement at UC Davis. The higher the IR, the more inbred. The lower, the more outbred. Breed for litter averages below 0 to produce outbred puppies.

## The UC Davis Certificate. What do you get?

**DOG GENETIC DIVERSITY ANALYSIS**  
AN OUTBRED ALASKAN KLEE KAI

Breed: Alaskan Klee Kai  
Sex: Female  
Color:  
DOB: 2000  
Reg:

Case: DR999998  
Print Date: May 5, 2015  
Report ID: 9303-0903-0003-0105

**IR relative to Alaskan Klee Kais**  
Frequency  
IR = -0.29 (+0.22 to -0.25)

**Diversity Panel**

**Alaskan Klee Kai DLA**

	DLA I	DLA II
Haplotype 1	1014	2037
Haplotype 2	1062	2021

DLA I and DLA II are the most polymorphic regions of the DLA system. Haplotype 1 and Haplotype 2 are the most common haplotypes in the breed. Choosing mates differing in their DLA haplotypes helps maintain diversity in the breed.

Veterinary Genetics Laboratory  
One Shields Avenue, Davis, CA 95616  
530-752-3211  
www.vgl.ucdavis.edu

NIELS PEDERSEN  
1 SHIELDS AVE  
DAVIS, CA 95616

These are the markers used to map breed-wide diversity. These can be used in breeding programs, like Betterbred, to create breeding tools.

This area names the regions of the DLA, or immune system, of a dog. Numbers in the 1000s are the Class I haplotypes, 2000s the Class II. UC Davis tests the most areas of DLA of any test currently.

measurements are *DLA Haplotype*; *Outlier Index*; *Average Genetic Relatedness*; and *Internal Relatedness*.

This allows you to look at other (public) dog profiles and compare potential mates based on the values you desire to balance the values in your own dog.

Choosing a potential mate allows you to run a *Litter Prediction*, this is a similar function to the *Trial Mating* available in [iwdb.org](http://iwdb.org).

However, in IWDB.org, we use Coefficient of Inbreeding – where the value is the same for the entire

predicted values expected in the litter. The reason there is a range of values is that each pup will inherit different genetic parcels from each parent. And each parent will contribute common, neutral and uncommon genetic material in relation to the breed.

My participation in this project is fuelled by my own interest in genetics and anything DNA related.

**However, without the support of the owners and breeders of the first 100 or so dogs, Irish Wolfhounds will not have this test available to them in the future.**

health, longevity (all these can be thought of as phenotype) and now (or soon at least) genetic diversity or genotype.

For further details, please request to join the Facebook group set up to support the project.

[www.facebook.com/groups/259895624793999/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/259895624793999/)

# Startle Disease

By **Miranda Brace**

A little while ago it was brought to our attention that there was information on a site advising prospective puppy buyers (Pets4Homes), which seemed to imply that Startle Disease, correctly called Hyperekplexia, was a common problem in Irish Wolfhounds. This is not so - it is very far from common. It is unfortunate that the only disease we currently have a DNA test for is something so very rare that none of us are likely ever to see it. We will be contacting Pets4Homes to point this out.

This disease, already well known in human infants, Belgian Blue cattle and mice, is referred to as Startle disease as the startle response is very pronounced. It affects newborns and the exaggerated response is triggered by touch or noise. It is characterised by low birth weight, muscle stiffness and tremors, the legs being stretched out and stiff, difficulty breathing, an inability to stand and, in the case of puppies, piteous crying. The symptoms cease when the pups are relaxed or sleeping. Sometimes the symptoms can be mistaken for epilepsy, although quite unrelated to that.

It is caused by a defect in genes encoding glycinergic neurotransmission which results in neonatal hypertonia (excessive muscle tension). The affected genes in human babies have been identified as GLRA1, GLRB and SLC65A but the gene implicated in Irish Wolfhounds is GlyT2. It is always fatal in puppies, unlike human infants who do respond to treatment.

“It is characterised by low birth weight, muscle stiffness and tremors”

This all came to light comparatively recently when two pups in a litter in America were diagnosed and, thanks to the extremely responsible and prompt action of the breeder concerned, the problem was contained. The dam and other litter mates were found to be carriers. It meant the breeder had to abandon a whole breeding line and now has all her puppies tested for carrier status and is only breeding from tested clear stock.

When this happened, people who had semen stored from their dogs were asked to have that tested as that would show past carriers, therefore any descendants could possibly be carriers also. This only applied to US dogs as no sign of it has appeared over here. Added to which, it is only recently that people in the UK have begun to store semen. Unfortunately there was no way to track back on the DNA of deceased females but pedigree comparison could show a possible link.

There is a diagnostic polymerase chain reaction test for carriers, who are asymptomatic, so that prospective sires and dams can be checked before a mating takes place. We have not taken advantage of this test in the UK as we have never heard of anything like this in a UK litter. Although there is exported British stock behind these pups, no descendants have come back the other way.

However, should anyone wish to have breeding stock screened the person to contact is Prof. Robert J. Harvey, PhD, Department of Pharmacology, UCL School of Pharmacy, 29-39 Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1AX or

email [r.j.harvey@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:r.j.harvey@ucl.ac.uk) The Irish Wolfhound Health Group have promised Prof. Harvey that if we hear of anything resembling these symptoms in IW pups, we will contact him immediately and advise the breeder to contact him. So far, thankfully, nothing has come to light.

It cannot be stressed strongly enough that this is a very rare disease indeed and, when reading scary things on a general website, it would be a good idea to check with the Health Group directly as we do keep an eye on everything we can, however rare it may be. If we can put peoples' minds at ease and/or point them to a specialist, we will do so.

The affected American lines are known to the group and if anyone has any concerns when planning to import a puppy or semen, please contact us.

Also, anyone who wishes more detailed information about this condition, please feel free to contact

[mirandabraehead@gmail.com](mailto:mirandabraehead@gmail.com)

## How Can You Contribute to Health Research in Irish Wolfhounds

By **Dr Maura Lyons, PhD, IWHG Research Co-ordinator**

The IWHG are involved with or coordinating various research projects in Irish Wolfhounds, many are still ongoing and need your help. Take a read through the following list and see if your hound can help contribute to research helping to maintain and improve the health status of the breed.

### 1) **Nottingham University Osteosarcoma longitudinal project – Dr Mark Dunning.**

We are still recruiting dogs and owners for this ambitious project. For those dogs already swabbed for this project please remember to complete the health update

surveys annually. For anyone who has experienced bone cancer in their dogs in the past, whether the dog was swabbed or not, there is a Treatment Survey to determine which treatments are offered by primary care vets and which are most successful. There are also two further surveys, one for wolfhound owners who have decided to amputate for reasons other than osteosarcoma and also owners who have never experienced either amputation or osteosarcoma.

**Survey 1** – please complete this survey if you have

experience of amputation in your wolfhound but it was for a reason other than bone cancer: [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/IW-amputation](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/IW-amputation)

**Survey 2** – Please complete this survey if you have never experienced either bone cancer/osteosarcoma or amputation in your wolfhound: [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/canine\\_amputation1](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/canine_amputation1)

Whilst it is hoped that no wolfhound ever suffers from bone cancer again, if your dog is swabbed and gets a confirmed

diagnosis of bone cancer, please get in touch with Mark to see how you can help. This is a large project with many angles and full details can be found on the webpage: [www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/nottingham-university.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/nottingham-university.html)

**2) Nottingham University Heart disease research – Professor Malcolm Cobb and Dr Serena Brownlie-Sykes.**

By taking part in the IWHG Regional Heart Testing scheme you are contributing to this ongoing project, possibly the longest running veterinary research project ever! The results of your wolfhound's heart test are recorded in the database and used by the team at Nottingham University to unravel the specifics of wolfhound heart disease. To book a slot and contribute to this valuable research whilst also looking after your own dog's heart please find a session closest to you and get in touch with Anne Vaudin. [www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/dates-and-locations-.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/dates-and-locations-.html)

**3) Nottingham University Pneumonia research – Dr Angela Bodey and Dr Mark Dunning.**

If your wolfhound has ever experienced pneumonia or any other type of respiratory disease or any type of nasal disease (snotty nose) we are collecting case

studies so that our researchers may evaluate the most effective treatments and devise a recommended treatment protocol. Please see all details and fill out the survey on the webpage here:

[www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/pneumonia.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/pneumonia.html)

**4) Animal Health Trust (AHT) – Give a Dog a Genome/Osteosarcoma research – Dr Mike Starkey.**

Thanks to your support and donations, the IWHG have been able to fund participation in the ambitious Give a Dog a Genome project, as well as funding the whole genome sequencing of 5 wolfhounds. This has allowed Mike and his team at AHT to study in depth the differences between affected and unaffected dogs genomes, this has led to identifying several areas of the genome which may play a part in influencing the development of bone cancer in wolfhounds.

An in-depth report was published in the last newsletter and more details can be found here:

[www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/animal-health-trust.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/animal-health-trust.html)

and here:

<http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/give-a-dog-a-genome.html>

**5)- Nottingham University FCE research – Dr Mark Dunning.**

Irish Wolfhounds appear to suffer from a unique form of FCE, one which affects them in puppyhood, which is why this condition is also known as puppy paralysis. It is hoped that by studying the experience of wolfhounds affected by FCE, this research could determine what causes it and the most appropriate treatment for a favourable outcome. Ellen Kroll has written a comprehensive article about FCE which is available on our webpage. If your wolfhound has experienced any form of puppy paralysis or FCE please fill out the survey.

[www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/puppy-paralysis.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/puppy-paralysis.html)

**6)- University of Utrecht Liver Shunt project – Dr Frank van Steenbeek.**

Dr Steenbeek started his research project into liver shunt in Irish Wolfhounds as a PhD student studying for his doctorate. Since gaining his doctorate he is continuing to investigate the causes of liver shunt in wolfhounds. He is still collecting DNA samples from affected dogs and their parents – if you can help his research by providing a sample then please do so.

Details of how to help are here: [www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/liver-shunt-1.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/liver-shunt-1.html)

**7) AHT DNA Repository Scheme – Emma Hales.**

The DNA storage program is still available at the AHT. The easiest way to provide samples for this is for a breeder to collect an extra 1ml of blood from each puppy at liver shunt testing time. Thereafter each new owner should be informed to update the AHT with any health issues the puppy may encounter throughout its life. Full details, sample submission forms and health status updates forms can be found at the webpage; [www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/dna-storage-programme.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/dna-storage-programme.html)

**8) Nottingham University Atrial Fibrillation and blood clots in giant breed dogs – Lowri Heseltine.**

This research is looking at the effects and outcomes of atrial fibrillation in giant breed dogs, and in particular whether there is an increased likelihood of suffering a blood clot event associated with a diagnosis of AF. If you have or had an Irish Wolfhound with a confirmed diagnosis of AF please fill out the survey here: [www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/nottingham-university-1.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/nottingham-university-1.html)

**9) IWHG Liver shunt/ Epilepsy and PRA reporting survey – Dr Maura Lyons.**

This is a simple form to record incidences of Liver shunt, Epilepsy and PRA. This enables the IWHG to monitor the prevalence of these diseases within the IW population. If you have experienced these conditions in your wolfhound, please fill out the survey with your experiences. [www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/health-survey.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/health-survey.html)

**10) IWHG Dentition survey – Mrs Caroline Sheppard.**

Caroline has been collecting examples of jaw growth in wolfhound puppies in order to provide evidence concerning the eventual alignment of teeth in the adult wolfhound.

The IW is on the KC Breed Watch list for instances of misaligned canines, the IWHG feel that if this is seen in a growing puppy there is every chance the condition could correct itself – either if left or with some targeted therapy. If you have experienced puppies with teeth issues, please contact Caroline to share your experiences.

[www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/about-the-study.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/about-the-study.html)

**11) IWHG Veteran survey – Mrs Caroline Sheppard.**

The IWHG would like to hear about your veteran wolfhounds. If you have a wolfhound who has lived to over 7 years then please fill out the questionnaire. It includes details about lifestyle and environment in order to see if there is a correlation between any of these factors and longevity in wolfhounds. You can find the details and a link to the survey on the webpage: [www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/veteran-study.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/veteran-study.html)

Please sign up for notifications of announcements on our website here:

[www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/home.html](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/home.html)

# IWHG Report and Accounts for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017

by **Steven Ritchie (Treasurer)**

The accounts for the year to **31<sup>st</sup> December 2017** have now been approved and published on our website:

[www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/files/accounts17.pdf](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/files/accounts17.pdf)

[www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/files/report17.pdf](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/files/report17.pdf)

At the end of 2017 the balance sheet stood at **£32,662** (2016: £24,854).

This comprised:

- the **Project Development Fund** with a balance of **£8,670** (2016: £6,880)
- the **Osteosarcoma Fund** with a balance of **£10,576** (2016: £10,576)
- the **Pneumonia Fund** with a balance of **£2,800** (2016: £2,800)

- the **Heart Testing Scanner Fund** with a balance of **£10,000** (2016: £4,000)
- the **Administration Account** with a balance of **£616** (2016: £598).

During the year, £6,000 was allocated from the Project Development Fund to the Heart Testing Scanner Fund to start bringing the fund up to a sufficient value to replace the Heart Scanner or to cover the cost of significant repairs if required.

Regional Heart Testing made an overall surplus of £599 in the year without the need of the proposed funding of £1,000 from the Project Development Fund to subsidise the Super Veterans heart testing, which continues to be free of charge.

Many Super Veteran owners continue to cover the cost of their own heart testing, which is greatly appreciated.

The funding priorities identified for the Project Development Fund for 2018 are as follows:

- Allowance for Super-Veteran subsidies 2018 - set aside £1,000.

We would like to thank our fundraisers, donators and supporters for helping to generate donations of over £4,900 in 2017, a fantastic achievement which will help support current and future breed research projects.

The seminar in November realised a surplus of £316 and the raffle took in gross receipts of £2,000 with all tickets sold. Thank you to everyone who attended the seminar, and to those who donated raffle prizes and purchased tickets for your valued support.

# Updates

We have been reviewing and updating a number of our publications and would like to draw your attention to these:

## **Breed Booklet**

General advice on looking after your wolfhound.

<http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/breed-guide.html>

## **Puppy Buyer's Guide**

Sound advice to anyone looking for an IW puppy.

[http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/files/GUIDE-puppy\\_8g5w6s93.pdf](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/files/GUIDE-puppy_8g5w6s93.pdf)

## **Heart Testing Sessions**

Current dates available here.

<http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/dates-and-locations-.html>

## **Heart Test Booking Form**

To book a session for your hound(s).

<http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/booking.html>

PDF and Word versions available to download as well.

## Dates for your diary

### Wednesday 19th September 2018

KC Breed Health Symposium  
at The Kennel Club Building, Stoneleigh,  
CV8 2LZ,

focusing on the following topics:

- Canine Cancers
- Common skin problems in the dog
- The Breed Health Co-ordinator Mentor Scheme Panel Question and Answer session

Tickets are available for £25 and can be found on the Kennel Club's website through clicking [here](#).

### Saturday 23rd February 2019

Nottingham Veterinary School  
Breeder/Owner day.

Venue and Programme TBA nearer the time.

This is open to all owners and is a shared day with the Deerhounds.

### End November 2019

IWHG Breed Health Seminar – more details in the next Newsletter.

## CONTACT US

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