



IWHG Annual Report 2019

2019 was a very busy year for the IWHG with the Regional Heart Testing Scheme, ongoing research projects, our work with the KC on the Breed Health & Conservation Plan (BHCP) and the Breed Health Survey. We also had our Biennial Breed Health Seminar in November which was extremely well received – but more of that later. As ever, our aim is to keep everyone updated with the latest research, provide helpful guides and support when needed to owners and breeders.

Heart Testing

The heart testing scheme were pleased to have 5 cardiologists for 2019: Serena Brownlie-Sykes, Angela Bodey, Sheena Milne, Dave Fisher and Sue Roberts. We are totally indebted to our cardiologists who kindly offer their time to undertake these sessions for us and ultimately for the benefit of owners and hounds. We have been informed by Angela that she wishes to cut back on the time she spends for this scheme and this may impact on the numbers of sessions overall that can be offered. A very big thank you to her for the work she has done for us over the years and we are pleased she will still be available for dates in 2020. We have benefited from cardiologists being able to spare the time for these heart testing sessions, but we must be mindful that there isn't a long list of cardiologists waiting to step in if one leaves.

Anne Vaudin continued to undertake the daily running of the scheme and has continued to do an amazing job organising the session planners during the year. 2019 saw an increase in price from £45 to £50 which was needed to continue to cover costs, considering Cardiologist fees. With the cost staying at £50 per dog in 2020 for the full three-part test it certainly remains exceptional value.

In total we ran 22 sessions throughout the UK and 1 session in Ireland. There were 308 attendees, some of which included second bookings for the same hound. There was a healthy attendance of Super Veterans; 27 attendees with 1 hound tested twice making 26 individual Super Veterans tested through the scheme. Hounds aged over 8 years were again able to have their first test of the year subsidised by the Health Group. We also want to thank all the people who offer their premises and their time to accommodate some of the testing sessions as it can be a demanding undertaking acting as host to these busy sessions and we are deeply appreciative of their support.

Moving forward into 2020, the Health Group will continue to subsidise the cost of the first session per annum for all Super Veterans and the Irish Wolfhound Rescue Trust are again able to cover the cost for any Irish Wolfhound Rescued through the Trust. As announced in our Winter Newsletter, the Irish Wolfhound Club have kindly offered to subsidise half the

cost of Super Veterans second test per annum. This is a great gesture and will, we are sure, be welcomed by everyone.

The year is in full swing already with sessions being finalised for 2020 and dates will be published directly onto the website when confirmed. We will still be using the online booking form, which has proven a great success and makes the booking process much easier and more efficient. If you have signed up for email notifications for website updates, you will be notified as the sessions become available for booking.

A reminder that the Health Group have facilitated the publishing of heart testing results. This is voluntary and can be accessed via our Website.

BetterBred

2019 saw the introduction of the BetterBred project. The project is designed to establish the genetic diversity of our breed which, in turn, could help breeders in the future by identifying dogs that carry fewer common genes, and so avoiding bottlenecks. We believe this could be a very important project given that we know our breed has a limited gene pool, but to what extent is unclear. The diversity test, when complete, will offer a breeder one more tool in their quest to breed healthy hounds providing a wider selection of mates as the genetic makeup of the individual hound will be available rather than relying on pedigree data and COI and its limitations. We will monitor the progress of this project and keep everyone updated but for more information see our Website.

Atrial Fibrillation

The IWHG continue to look at ways in which heart related data, which has been collected by Serena Brownlie Sykes over the past 30 years, can be utilised by the breed. Tom Lewis, qualitative geneticist with the Kennel Club, attended our 2017 health seminar and suggested that because of the breadth and depth of the heart data collected that it may be possible to develop an Estimated Breeding Value (EBV) risk analysis tool for breeders.

Since heart disease is a complex trait it is not possible to have a simple genetic test to discover whether a hound is a carrier or not of the disease allele. In these situations, a risk analysis tool can be utilised which gives each animal an Estimated Breeding Value (EBV) for the trait. This would give each dog a score based on many values to assess its risk of passing on heart disease to its offspring. This would work in a similar way to the KC risk analysis tool for hip and elbow dysplasia screening, which is explained in detail on their website. (Just search for Estimated Breeding Values).

Tom and Serena met in December of 2019 to discuss whether the potential to develop this tool was possible. Though both are very busy people and Tom has many projects in the pipeline for different breeds, he is hopeful that this can be progressed within the first half of 2020. We will continue to monitor and report any progress that is achieved.

Funds

We continue to be astounded by the support we receive from our fundraisers and those who support them in their efforts.

In the last quarter of 2019, we received some amazing donations.

We were delighted to receive the very generous donation of £839 from the Irish Wolfhound Club from the Wolfhound of the Year event in October, an event which also benefited the other breed support groups, the IW Rescue Trust and PAWS.

Mandy Addington raised the phenomenal sum of £3,000 from the sale of calendars and Christmas cards which was shared between the breed support groups. The IWHG was delighted with its donation of £1,000 so a huge thank you once again to Mandy.

The raffle at our own IWHG seminar in November raised £940.00 which was only made possible by the very generous prizes donated by many of our valued supporters who we can't thank enough.

Easyfundraising continues to be a great source of donations with a total of £744.34 received in 2019, so thank you everyone who raises donations in this way. You can check out "how to" on our Website.

Thank you to everyone who handed in loose change tins, those pennies soon add up. A special thank you to Kevin and Adele Campbell-Woodford for handing in a very heavy tin containing over £145!

All our income is from donations that we receive, and we would like to thank each and every one of you who contributes to the group in any way, be that by giving money or providing prizes or your time and expertise for fundraising activities - every penny counts and we sincerely appreciate all of you.

The accounts for the year to **31st December 2019** will be published once they have been audited.

The Team

At the Breed Health Seminar Rebecca Peek stood down as Chair and BH Co-ordinator. Rebecca has been with the HG since its inception 15 years ago and we were extremely sad that she felt that the time had come to step down. She has left the Group well placed to carry on the work of the HG and handed the reins over to Jean Timmins as Chair and Maura Lyons as BH Co-ordinator.

Tim and Marion Finney have also decided to take a well-earned rest from the Health Group. Their dedication and support for the past 15 years has been much appreciated. They too will be sorely missed from the Committee although they will continue to be involved with the Heart Testing Scheme.

Wendy Reeves joined the group as Secretary in the Spring of 2019 and will look after the Longevity Recognition Programme as part of her secretarial role within the Group.

Projects

Livershunt – Our partnership with the new testing lab Cytopath continues to go well and we have just completed our first full year with them. So far it's been running smoothly and prices were held to a level we were formerly paying with Idexx. In terms of feedback, we obviously do not get any details beyond statistics i.e. numbers of puppies tested and

numbers affected. This does give us an idea of how many pups are tested as against the total bred per year and it's a positive thing that the majority of breeders, whoever they are do test. The total number of puppies registered in 2019 was 229. The number of puppies tested through Cytopath was 66, of those 66 tests only one test was consistent portosystemic shunt. This is a drop in numbers being tested from previous years but we believe it is due to the change of lab, some breeders still using Idexx or other local labs. Please do remember the breed scheme offers a special rate for Irish Wolfhounds and the forms can be downloaded from the Health Group website.

The procedure remains the same as indicated on the previous testing forms, with one main exception: breeders will need to order a pre-addressed envelope from Cytopath well in advance of the test being done. All the information needed is on the testing forms which are available on the website.

GDV/Bloat – At the end of 2018 Nottingham Veterinary School asked the breed to become involved in a new study on Bloat (Gastric Dilatation Volvulus/GDV), which was already underway with Deerhounds and Greyhounds. It is breed specific, but is also being reviewed against these other breed studies. This is a study investigating the factors influencing bloating and the development and outcome of GDV in Irish Wolfhounds in the UK. This project is based on owner reported incidences of bloat and GDV in their wolfhounds and comparison to dogs unaffected by bloating. This is still considered a very serious condition in IWHs so is well worth participating in. We know you are asked to fill in a lot of surveys, but we hope that some of this will bear fruit and help all IWHs in the future. Again, details are on the Website.

Pneumonia – We continue to ask owners, who have had a hound with pneumonia, to complete the survey if you haven't done so already. This remains of great importance as pneumonia now ranks third in the conditions our breed can suffer from. We continue to have support from veterinary surgeons Angela Bodie and Mark Dunning who are leading the study and ensuring we maintain up to date guideline information. The guidelines for veterinary surgeons and owners are on the website and it's always a good idea to discuss this condition with your vet before you find yourself with a hound with pneumonia.

Breed Health Conservation Plan – Dr Maura Lyons as the Breed Health Co-ordinator is working with the KC and Breed Bodies to complete a final version of the BHCP by early 2020. The purpose of the project is to ensure that all health concerns for a breed are identified through evidence-based criteria, and that breeders are provided with useful information and resources to support them in making balanced breeding decisions which make health a priority.

As expected, heart disease and osteosarcoma are still the most commonly reported causes of death among wolfhounds, which reflects what has been reported in the Annual Health Report for many years now but, interestingly, Pneumonia now features joint third with Bloat as the most common illnesses.

One of the interesting results from the Breed Survey is that the most common conditions that we take our hounds to the vet for are the same as for all other breeds, namely chronic ear infections, chronic tummy upsets/diarrhoea and skin allergies. Whilst immensely irritating and frustrating for the dog and the owner, these are not usually life threatening.

Breed Health Seminar

Our Breed Health Seminar was held on Saturday 9th November 2019. We were delighted that so many like-minded wolfhound owners and breeders were keen to join us. We also had a mix of other breed owners attending which helped to make the day so well balanced with everyone gaining from each other's experiences.

We were extremely pleased to have presentations which were all thought provoking - topics such as

- **'Itchy Skin and Allergies'** with Rosario Cerundolo, a renowned specialist Veterinary Dermatologist.
- **'Vaccinations'** with Dr Steve Dunham, Nottingham University
- **'Dentition'** with Caroline Sheppard
- **'Research Update' and 'BetterBred'** with Dr Maura Lyons

Mandy Addington helped us get into the Christmas spirit with her stall selling Christmas Cards and Calendars. The Health Group raffle raised, as mentioned before, a fabulous £940. What can we say but a huge thank you to those who donated prizes and to those who bought tickets. We were all treated to a fabulous buffet prepared by Miranda Brace and her helpers. We had cakes donated by Wendy Heather and a special cake celebrating 15 years of the Health Group donated by Rebecca Peek.

Last of all was Rebecca's announcement about her stepping down as Chair and Breed Health Co-ordinator. The HG and Breed bodies presented her with a picture of one of her own hounds. There wasn't a dry eye in the house!

As always, we reviewed what had been discussed throughout the day and identified what the key objectives were going forward, so

The Way Ahead

BHCP

Obtain sign off from the Breed Clubs, report back to the Kennel Club and to publish on the Health Group website.

EBV's

Continue supporting the work towards developing Risk Analysis data.

Surveys

There are a few projects on the go – please check out our Website or obtain details from our Winter Newsletter. Please, we urge owners to participate where they can. With more data these projects will provide more worthwhile results.

Dentition

A particular concern given that it now appears on the Kennel Clubs list of notifiable issues. Our data collection continues, and the hope is that our findings may find a forum for publication so that we can encourage awareness of the natural growth of the jaw in a giant breed. The aim is to hopefully stem the increasing trend for surgical intervention in young puppies with misplaced incisors which may well correct by the time they are fully grown.

BetterBred

This project is potentially valuable to any breed but, seeing the possible benefits to breeding programmes for the Irish Wolfhound, the Health Group have decided to support the project by sponsoring twenty DNA tests. This means the lab can approach owners of hounds who may have unusual genetics or disappearing lines and who may not wish, or be able, to fund a DNA test themselves but would hopefully agree to adding the DNA of their dog to the project.

If you would like to add your dog to the study the price of a test is currently held at \$50. Please see our Website for details.

Vaccinations Study / Titre Testing with the IWClub

We are looking to develop a guideline on vaccinations based around the information gleaned at the Seminar and are hoping to work with Steve Dunham on this in the coming months.

NT ProBNP Efficacy Study with regional Heart Testing Scheme and IWClub

This has stalled largely due to the reservations of Serena Brownlie on the outcomes of the test; the difficulties faced taking blood purely for research purposes and the emergence of another test which may supersede the ProBNP. It remains a watching brief and any developments will be reported via the Health Group website.

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Everyone on the Health Group would like to say thank you to you all for the support you give; whether it's supporting the fundraising, giving us your views or contributing to the many health projects, it is greatly appreciated.

A final note from Jean Timmins, the new Chair – I would like to personally thank Rebecca, Tim and Marion for all the work and time they have put into the Group over the many years. A big thank you to our current members who also give so much of their time and support to the Group, and of course thank you for the support of the wider membership and Wolfhound Community which is always appreciated and never more so than when we have a year of change and challenges. As our website states - The purpose of the group is to monitor and promote the health and welfare of the breed, to educate and inform, and to be a united breed voice in all matters relating to health issues. This is your Health Group and we do hope we can count on your continued support for the benefit of our lovely breed. Thank you.