



IWHG Annual Report 2020

2020 was a very unusual year for us all and brought many challenges to our normal everyday lives. The Health Group continued to work with our cardiologists to provide a number of Heart Screening sessions; working with them and the venue hosts to provide a safe environment for all those involved. The many research projects, plus our work with The Kennel Club on the Breed Health & Conservation Plan (BHCP), have continued although many of our contributors have been affected either by being furloughed or in some cases being made redundant. 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 Screening

The Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown restrictions put in place by the Government meant that we were unable to offer sessions until late into the year. Understandably our cardiologists, venue hosts and indeed owners, all wanted sessions to take place but in a controlled and safe manner. We have in past years been able to work with 5 cardiologists to organise heart screening sessions; but in 2020 we only had Angela Bodey and Dave Fisher who between them carried out 8 sessions for us. We want to thank them so much for giving up their time to undertake these sessions in what have been very difficult circumstances. We know that owners and breeders who took part have been extremely grateful to have been able to get their hounds screened during 2020. As we stated in our Annual Report 2019, we know that Angela still wishes to cut back on the time she spends on this scheme. We are working to increase the number of cardiologists we can call upon so that we can continue to offer these sessions. We are thankful we have cardiologists who are able to spare the time for these heart screening sessions but, as we have said before, there isn't a long list of replacements waiting to step in if one leaves.

Continuing to work with the BVA / VCS and our cardiologists, plus ensuring we offer safe and Covid-19 appropriate venues for these sessions may well continue to impact on the number of sessions we can run in 2021, but we will endeavour to put on as many as we are able. As mentioned, for 2020 we ran 8 sessions in the UK which was down on the previous year in which we were able to organise 22. There were 84 attendees during a 3 month period of which we were able to heart screen 6 super veterans and 4 rescue hounds. Hounds aged over 8 years were again able to have their first test of the year subsidised by the Health Group.

We have to thank our hosts for agreeing to hold sessions during 2020. They have all had to jump through hoops to comply with health and safety arrangements and we are extremely grateful to them for working with us and complying with the cardiologists requirements.

We are also very grateful as always, to Anne Vaudin for managing the booking process in 2020, in what was a much more involved year due to last minute cancellations and also having to ensure Covid-19 protocols were in place, to comply with BVA and Health & Safety guidelines. The fee per hound increased from £50 to £65 which was necessary to continue to cover costs.

Planning has already started for sessions in 2021 and with Covid-19 likely to be still with us we are faced with additional costs covering items such as PPE and a cardiologist's assistant. It is with regret, therefore, that we may face a further rise in the fee per hound for 2021 due to the increasing overall costs we will incur. We will maintain our commitment to delivering the same screening fee in all areas of the country regardless of any variation in session numbers. Even with a small increase in price the full three-part screening certainly remains exceptional value. Updates on pricing and forthcoming sessions will appear on the website.

For this coming year we can confirm that 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 2019 Winter Newsletter, the Irish Wolfhound Club kindly offered to subsidise half the cost of super veterans second test per annum. Although we didn't have any super veterans falling into this category in 2020 the IWC have confirmed that this subsidy can be utilised in 2021.

We are in discussions with our cardiologists to organise sessions in 2021 and we are very pleased to say that they are all happy to work with us to put dates in the diary, but with the current lockdown situation they cannot commit to booking specific dates as yet. We hope to arrange sessions at our longstanding venues but we are also investigating other appropriate places we could use. The on-line booking form has continued to make the whole process easy to use and is an efficient tool. It's worth mentioning that if you have signed up for website updates you will receive a notification email to let you know when sessions become available for booking.

Don't forget that you can publicise heart screening results via our Website.

Funds

Even with such difficult times in the past year, we are humbled by the support and commitment from those who raise funds for the Irish Wolfhound related causes of which the Health Group is a regular beneficiary and say thank you to everyone involved.

In 2020, we received some fabulous donations.

Mandy Addington raised the phenomenal sum of £8,731 from the sale of calendars and Christmas cards which was shared between the breed support groups. The IWHG was the very grateful recipient of £2,910 so a huge thank you to Mandy for her amazing fundraising efforts for our breed.

Wolfhound of the Year raised a magnificent £838 for the IWHG, as well as donations for the other breed bodies, so a big thank you to the Irish Wolfhound Club.

Easy-fundraising continues to be a good source of donations with a total of £672 received in 2020, so thank you everyone who raises donations in this way. You can check out "how to"

on our Website. With more online shopping being done during the pandemic there's an even bigger opportunity for us all to raise free donations for the IWHG.

We also want to say a big thank you to Peter and Tom Brand who donated £500 to the Health Group.

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 2020** will be published once they have been audited.

The Team

We were joined by two additional committee members in 2020. Elaine Catlow and Chris Taylorson.

Elaine has been involved with wolfhounds since 1985 and has successfully bred litters under the Laoiseach affix. Over the years she has worked with the Irish Wolfhound Rescue Trust doing home checks, assessing dogs and organising relocations. Chris has also been involved with Wolfhounds for some time owning his first in 1986. He has spent many years on the IW Club committee and has enjoyed spending time at the shows and rallies.

We welcome them both to the team.

Projects

AHT – Since the Animal Health Trust has been dissolved we believe that the samples in this blood repository have been given to the University of Cambridge Veterinary School. We are still trying to find out details and await information from The Kennel Club regarding these samples.

BetterBred - As a reminder in 2019 we 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. 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.

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 20 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.

We will monitor the progress of this project and keep everyone updated but for more information see our website.

Dentition - A topic we discussed at the 2019 Breed Health Seminar. It was such a thought provoking item that further data was collected and Caroline Sheppard prepared an article for the IWHG 2020 Summer Newsletter and also guides for owners and vets all of which can be found on our website. The aim remains to hopefully stem the increasing trend for surgical intervention in young puppies with misplaced lower canines which may well correct by the time they are fully grown. We think this will continue to be a very important concern particularly that it now appears on The Kennel Club's list of notifiable issues.

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

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

If you have a litter, or are expecting one soon, or own a puppy that your vet has told you has a mouth fault, please consider completing the survey on our website.

EBV's - As simple genetic tests cannot be developed for complex inherited issues it is hoped by utilising Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) we can guide the IW population away from heart disease. Tom Lewis of The Kennel Club had suggested that it may be possible to develop EBV's for the IW breed by utilising data collected by Serena Brownlie from the IWHG Heart Screening Scheme. Serena and Tom have had an initial meeting during December of 2019 and it was hoped that this project would be progressed during 2020 but this just hasn't been possible. We will continue to work with Tom and Serena on this and will publish any findings as soon as we are able.

GDV/Bloat – Back in 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. 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 Irish Wolfhounds so is well worth participating in. Again, details of how you can participate are on the website.

Livershunt – The move from Idexx to Cytopath has proved smooth and successful with testing carrying on as per usual and at the agreed reduced rate for our breed scheme. The total number of puppies tested in 2020 was understandably much reduced as breeding was generally curtailed; statistics say that 74 puppies were tested over the year, with none affected. This figure obviously does not include breeders who use other labs. Forms for testing can be downloaded from the Health Group website.

Pneumonia – This is ongoing as a data collection project and it is so important that anyone who has had a hound affected with pneumonia complete a survey. Please go to the Health Group website and download the form. All the data goes directly to Angela Bodey who, together with Mark Dunning, are carrying out the study into this condition and also keeping our Guide on Pneumonia current and up to date.

Vaccinations Study / Titre Testing with the IW Club - We are looking to develop a guide on vaccinations based around the information gleaned at the 2019 Seminar and have been hoping to work with Steve Dunham on this but the pandemic has affected progress. We will continue to work on this project and will update everyone when more news is available.

Breed Health Conservation Plan

Dr Maura Lyons as the Breed Health Co-ordinator submitted the BHCP to the Breed bodies for review and it was accepted without any changes. The BHCP is now with The Kennel Club and it is hoped that they will be in a position to accept the document for publication. We will, of course, add it to the website once complete.

Surveys

There are a few surveys on the go – please check out our website or obtain details from our Winter Newsletter.

Please, we urge owners to participate where they can. More data received from these surveys will provide more worthwhile results and ultimately help address some of the health issues affecting the breed.

A recent addition to our survey list is :

- Congenital Blindness Survey
There have been 5 surveys completed so far and although this isn't a particularly common occurrence, and causes vary, we will continue to obtain information on this and publish some analysis in a future Newsletter.

Newsletters

The Health Group is always on the lookout to bring owners relevant information for the benefit of owners and their hounds.

Some of the articles we have covered in 2020 have included:

- Spring 2020 - Puppy Strangles – Juvenile Cellulitis
- Summer 2020 – The Inheritance of Livershunts in IW
- Summer 2020 – Greyhound Exhaustion (HER – Hyperacute Exertional Rhabdomyolysis)
- Summer 2020 - Dentition in Puppies
- Autumn 2020 - IWDB Analysis on Lifespan between countries

Seminar 2021

The IWHG Biennial Breed Health Seminar would be something we would be planning to organise for this year. The planning for such an event takes many months and we feel we are not in a position to be able to arrange this event, given the uncertainty of the pandemic and potential restrictions in place.

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Once again we say thank you to you all for your continued support and patience in what has been a difficult and unpredictable year for everyone.