



IWHG Annual Report 2021

While we all know that 2021 was still challenging as Covid-19 remained, at least we hoped that things were getting back to some sort of normalcy. We recognized that owners were eager to get their hounds' hearts examined, and so we worked with our cardiologists and venue hosts to provide a safe environment for everyone. In addition to our research projects, we completed the Breed Health and Conservation Plan (BHCP) with The Kennel Club. A Webinar was held on October 17th, 2021, featuring Dr Jean Dodds who discussed vaccines and antibody testing; and two new committee members were welcomed to the team, Denise Pateman and Ann Donaldson, both experienced Irish Wolfhound owners, and we are delighted to have them join the IWHG.

Heart Screening

A total of 23 sessions were organised during 2021 enabling 261 hounds to be heart screened of which 6 were rescue hounds and 25 super veterans. The IWHG subsidised the heart screening of 22 super veteran hounds and the IWRT the 6 rescue hounds.

As we know how crucial these sessions are to everyone, we would like to thank not only our Cardiologists but also our hosts for ensuring that the sessions have been conducted in a controlled and safe manner. The Cardiologists that worked with us during 2021 deserve a huge thank you, and we hope Angela Bodey, Dave Fisher, Sheena Milne, Dave Dickson and Serena Brownlie will continue to work with us in 2022 as well.

Covid-19 has remained a constant feature in our lives but we continue to hope that we can increase the number of cardiologists we can call upon so that we can continue to offer these sessions. We are always hoping to add to our pool of cardiologists so that we can offer more sessions and in areas where hound numbers warrant presence.

We still had to ensure Covid-19 protocols were in place, to comply with BVA / VCS and Health & Safety guidelines albeit we were more practiced at it. To all those who have attended a session during 2021 thank you for working with us to maintain appropriate levels of compliance.

In 2021 we reluctantly had to increase the Heart Screening fee from £65 to £75 which will remain in place during 2022. Super Veterans are still paid for by the IWHG for the first test. The second test for that year is half paid for by the Irish Wolfhound Club. Hounds rescued through the Trust are paid for by the Trust, unless classed as Super Veterans whereby SV subsidy will apply. We will maintain our commitment to delivering the same screening fee in all areas of the country regardless of any variation in session numbers. Offering the full three-part screening certainly remains exceptional value at £75.

Anne Vaudin has continued to fill a very key role in the Heart Screening booking process, and we extend our thanks to her for being so organised and being the vital link between cardiologists, venue hosts and you the owners.

Wendy Heather has already started booking Heart Screening sessions for 2022 and if you want to be notified when sessions are available to book then please complete the form on the Dates & Locations page on the IWHG Website. Booking a place on a Heart Screening session remains a very easy process. Complete the on-line booking form on our website and you will be sent an invoice and confirmation of your booking slot and venue address details.

The result of your hound's heart screening and all information provided, remains confidential between owner and cardiologist. The regional cardiologists forward all heart screening results to Dr Serena Brownlie to include in her own database. Copies are provided for owners to keep and to give to their own vets. The cardiologist will advise the owner of any dog who may require further investigation/ treatment to consult with their own vet, for onward referral if necessary.

Please note: The IWHG do not receive copies of your hounds' results. However, you can choose to submit them to the webmaster for publication on the IWHG website. <http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/publication-of-results.html>

Funds

We would like to say a big THANK YOU once again to all our fundraisers and supporters, we sincerely appreciate all your efforts and generosity. The support and commitment from those who raise funds for Irish Wolfhound related causes, of which the Health Group is a regular beneficiary, is amazing.

Easy-fundraising continues to be a good source of donations with a total of £578 received in 2021, so thank you everyone who raises donations in this way. 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. You can check out "how to" on our website or by using the following link <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/iwhg/>.

Mandy Addington raised £4,040 through the Annual Raffle in March 2021 and in December 2021 the sale of calendars and cards raised a fabulous £5,826. In February this year there has been another amazing Raffle which has raised £5,875 all of which has been split between a number of breed bodies. There is so much work involved when organising these fundraising events and the IWHG would like to congratulate Mandy and all those involved for their fundraising efforts and to say thank you so much for the IWHG donations.

We are also very grateful to those of you who donate regularly by standing order or by just a one-off payment. We know these are difficult times and we would like to express our gratitude to everyone who raises funds for the group - no matter how big or small - as every penny is very much appreciated. 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 2021 will be published once they have been audited.

The Team

We were joined by two additional committee members in 2021: Denise Pateman and Ann Donaldson. Many of you will know them well.

Denise and her husband obtained their first IW in 1998. By 2005 they had moved house so they could share their lives with more Irish Wolfhounds. Denise has recently joined the Committee for the IW Club.

Ann's love of the Irish Wolfhound started in 1986 and has had many hounds over the years. She is on the Committee for the IW Society as Show Secretary and judges at open shows.

Both Denise and Ann are passionate about their hounds and the preservation of the breed for the future. We welcome them to the team and to their contribution to the IWHG.

Projects

The University of Cambridge (AHT)

Following the demise of the AHT (Animal Health Trust) in 2020 many of the staff, the research, the biological samples and digital information accumulated over many years and entrusted to AHT have been transferred to the University of Cambridge, where the Kennel Club are rebuilding their Canine Genetics Centre. Cathryn Mellersh is still in charge of the Genetics Centre but Mike Starkey, who was the lead researcher on the Irish Wolfhound osteosarcoma project is no longer employed by them.

The IWHG had previously provided funding of £8424.32 in 2016 in order to sequence in full, 6 wolfhound genomes, 5 from osteosarcoma affected dogs and one from an older hound unaffected by osteosarcoma. This was to allow the comparison of these genome sequences and hopefully identify DNA markers associated with an increased risk of developing osteosarcoma. Dr Starkey provided an exciting update to the audience at the IWHG 2017 seminar and then a further update in November 2019, which is available on our website at <https://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/animal-health-trust.html>. These six genomes are due to be made publicly available on the ENA (European Nucleotide Archive) sequence database <https://www.ebi.ac.uk/ena/browser/search>.

The other area Dr Starkey was involved with was the collection of blood and swab samples from litters and healthy dogs in order to follow them throughout their lifetimes. These samples are safely stored in a freezer at the University of Cambridge, currently there are samples from 440 wolfhounds. All of Dr Starkey's project are currently classified as 'inactive' and in order to resurrect them more funding and further agreements would need to be in place. The IWHG are currently in discussion with Cathryn Mellersh at the KC Genetics Centre to see how best we can utilise the samples and information that have been collected.

Betterbred

In 2019, the Betterbred project launched under the direction of Dr Maura Lyons. The project aims to establish a baseline of genetic diversity for our breed and developing a tool for breeders to maintain the diversity which we have. When complete, the diversity test will provide a breeder with another tool in their quest to breed healthy hounds; giving them the option of selecting mates more broadly, being able to consider genotypes as well as

phenotypes, alongside the more traditional methods of studying annotated pedigrees and considering Coefficient of Inbreeding values.

The project has been slow to be supported as the cost for a diversity test in the research phase is \$50 so to try and combat this, in 2021 the Irish Wolfhound Health Group decided to encourage participation by sponsoring a total of 26 diversity tests from hounds identified as being as distantly related as possible from the hounds whose diversity has already been tested and stored in the database.

The first group of invitations were sent out to people to claim their free tests during 2021. The invitations were well received and once the news of the scheme had been released, we were delighted to receive a flurry of new submissions to claim their free test. The important aspect is that tests should be for dogs which are least related to the dogs already taking part in the scheme. The aim is to cover the entire range of diversity that currently exists within the Irish Wolfhound breed population. The process from submission / invitation stage to the owner carrying out the swab, putting it in the post back to the US is quite straightforward.

The Betterbred project is likely to be another tool to use as part of an owner's breeding plan. We will monitor the progress of this project and keep everyone updated but for more information see our website.

Dentition

Vets suggesting surgical intervention in young puppies with misplaced deciduous lower canines, remains a concern. It is widely acknowledged that malocclusions of the deciduous teeth do not necessarily mean that the permanent teeth will be similarly affected. In addition, the final occlusion of the permanent teeth can continue to alter until the hound is 15 months, or more.

We continue to direct owners and breeders to the information on our website and our Puppy Booklet is being updated to include guidance on dentition, in the hope that painful and unnecessary surgery can be avoided.

Our immediate task remains to obtain sufficient information and photographic evidence to successfully challenge the Kennel Club's "Breed Watch" point, so that it only applies to wolfhounds over 18 months of age. The Health Group intends to approach the Kennel Club this year to request that further consideration be given to the "Breed Watch" point regarding the dentition of young Irish Wolfhounds.

We also hope to identify whether genetics play a significant part in the dental development of Irish Wolfhounds, as opposed to the known hereditary factors which apply more specifically to jaw formation. This would eventually enable breeders to make more informed choices when considering the blending of certain pedigrees.

If you have a litter, 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. If you are being advised to put your puppy through surgery, please do not hesitate to contact Caroline Sheppard, who can offer guidance to help you make a fully informed decision.

You can read more on this subject in the 2020 Summer Newsletter and also on our website, where you will find photographs and guides for owners and vets.

Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs)

Our ultimate aim is still to support the establishment of EBVs for heart disease, but the process has stalled somewhat with the departure of Tom Lewis from the Kennel Club. We are maintaining communications with his successor, Joanna Ilska, but restrictions due to COVID have understandably slowed progress. This whole project is based on the database of heart screening results collected by Serena Brownlie-Sykes over 30 years of testing our wolfhounds and curated by Malcolm Cobb at the University of Nottingham, so involving these partners is crucial. We will continue to work towards progressing this and will continue to keep you updated with any future findings.

GDV/Bloat

As a reminder 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. Check out our 2021 Winter Newsletter where you can read a personal experience of this condition by Dr Maura Lyons.

This is still considered a very serious condition in Irish Wolfhounds so is well worth participating in the survey – see our website for details.

Livershunt

The IWHG would like to remind everyone that we now recommend a new laboratory for Livershunt testing. The IWHG has negotiated a discounted price for this test, and we encourage breeders to use this laboratory as they report anonymised annual statistics back to us to allow us to monitor the incidence of livershunt in the breed. In the first year of testing (2020) Cytopath conducted 74 tests, and in 2021 they processed 80 tests. From both years all tests were negative. As this is somewhat short of the number of puppies born each year there is a slight concern that some breeders may not be testing puppies. However, anecdotally, we believe this would be a very small number of litters and feel it is far more likely that breeders and vets are still using other laboratories for the testing. In order to enable the IWHG to monitor the incidence of livershunt in the population we would encourage all breeders to utilise the discounted rate available from Cytopath. Forms for testing can easily be downloaded from the Health Group website.

Pneumonia

This disease continues to be a serious health condition for wolfhounds and the IWHG is working with the University of Nottingham to obtain updated data from owners who have previously completed the pneumonia survey. This is an ongoing data collection project, and it is so important that we urge anyone who has had a hound affected with pneumonia to complete a survey. Please go to the Health Group website where you will find the online survey. All the data goes directly to Angela Bodey who, together with Mark Dunning, are carrying out the study into this condition.

Please also download our Guide on Pneumonia, for owners and also the Guide for Veterinary Surgeons which we would urge owners to give to their vets in advance of any

issues. It is vitally important that owners can recognise the initial signs of pneumonia and that their vet is also educated to recognise the initial symptoms and to act quickly to get broad-spectrum antibiotic treatment into the hound as soon as possible to avoid negative outcomes.

Vaccinations Study / Titer Testing

We reported last year we planned to develop a Guide on vaccinations based around the information presented at our Seminar in 2019. We hoped to enlist the help of Steve Dunham but the pandemic has affected what we were able to achieve. We organised a virtual presentation with Jean Dodds on the subject which was attended by 60 attendees. Feedback was very complimentary and so we plan to organise more of these in the future.

There seems to be a lot of confusion on the whole subject of vaccinations. What gap should be left between inoculations and at what age to start them? Quite a lot of the confusion is from advice from vets and the vaccine manufacturers.

We will continue to work on this project and will update everyone when more news is available. We will also update the Vaccination Guide on our website to provide the latest information for owners.

Titer testing may well be the best way to understand how long immunity is lasting. Without the data on the various factors involved it is difficult to give any real guidance without measuring immunity. Collecting data on this subject is still something which the Health Group will investigate for the future.

FCE / Puppy Paralysis

The IWHG relaunched the FCE Study and this was highlighted in an article in the 2021 Winter Newsletter. Caroline Sheppard heads this important study. It is often practical guidance that is needed immediately to get a puppy up and moving when they are diagnosed with this condition. Without owners contributing to this study and importantly learning from the experiences of others with hounds suffering with this condition we will find that more hounds must be euthanized when perhaps early intervention may have helped. It is all about learning from what has been done which helps a puppy and sometimes even understanding what things were done which weren't helpful. We will continue to collect data on this project and provide updates either via our website or in future Newsletters.

Congenital Blindness

Congenital blindness isn't a very common occurrence in Irish Wolfhounds but we feel it is a condition we should investigate. At this stage we are just collecting case studies to see what conditions are thought to be the cause of the blindness and importantly how owners cope with their hounds and changes they make to their environment. If you have a hound that is diagnosed with this condition, please complete the survey on our website.

Breed Health Conservation Plan

Dr Maura Lyons as the Breed Health Co-ordinator submitted the BHCP (Breed Health & Conservation Plan) to the Breed bodies for review and it was accepted without any changes. The Kennel Club have accepted the BHCP, and it has been added to our website.

Surveys

As mentioned throughout this report there are a few surveys on the go so please do check out our website or obtain details from our 2021 Winter Newsletter. The more data we can

collect and analyse the better position we will be in to help address some of the health issues and ultimately provide owners and sometimes vets with vital guidance or worthwhile information to help owners and their hounds

Newsletters

The Health Group is always on the lookout to bring owners relevant information for the benefit of owners and their hounds. You can find all of our Newsletters on our website but a couple of articles we published in our Winter 2021 issue you might want to check out were:

GDV (Gastric Dilation Volvulus) and FCE (Puppy Paralysis Survey)

---ooOoo---

The IWHG are extremely grateful to you all for the contributions you make either via our surveys or contributing to conversations on our Facebook group. If you have a question, want some guidance on anything Irish Wolfhound health-wise, then get in touch. We have a large, international network of experienced vets and individuals, as well as researchers and veterinary academics to call upon when we need to, and all are willing to give of their time, experience and knowledge for the benefit of all of us. You will find ways to contact us on our website. Thank you for your support throughout 2021 and we will continue through 2022 to keep everyone updated with the latest research, provide helpful guides and support when needed to owners and breeders.

