

# Introducing your new Irish Wolfhound



A Guide to help you care for  
your Irish Wolfhound

**Published by the Irish Wolfhound Health Group**

The Irish Wolfhound Health Group was established in 2004 by the combined UK breed bodies to look at health issues within the breed in a unified way. Its purpose is to monitor and promote health and welfare, to educate and inform and to be a united voice on all matters relating to breed health. In 2016 it became an independent body, but still works in close association with the four UK breed bodies.

Although health issues are its main concern, the Group is in a strong position to lobby, in conjunction with the breed bodies, on Kennel Club or legislative issues that may affect the future integrity and reputation of the breed. The Group is not responsible for Breed Rescue as this is already well organised and taken care of by the clubs, but rescue owners and pet owners are encouraged to take part in any research and health programmes available to the breed.

The IWHG has produced this booklet to help you care for your new Irish Wolfhound throughout its life, to help you recognise when there may be a need for breeder advice and/or veterinary attention, together with suggestions on how to deal with some of the health issues which can affect Wolfhounds. More detailed information can be found on our website with Guides on major health topics and research projects that can be downloaded. We also have a thriving community on Facebook with our Irish Wolfhound Health Group public Group.

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Irish Wolfhound Health Group Website - [www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk)



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

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The IWHG would like to thank Allys Simpson for her hard work in producing the cartoon sketches used throughout this leaflet.



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## INTRODUCTION

The information on the following pages is suitable for any wolfhound coming into your home for the first time, whether a new puppy or an adult.

Give him lots of love and attention, feed, train and exercise him as suggested on the following pages, and you will end up with a beautiful, well-mannered Irish Wolfhound that has achieved his full potential and that you will be proud to have as a member of your family.

## SETTLING YOUR NEW WOLFHOUND INTO YOUR HOME

- DO** from the beginning please show him the RULES of the house.  
Be kind but firm.
- DO** give him lots of love and hugs and always praise him when he does what you want.
- DO** use single words when instructing, sentences will not be understood and he will be confused and then not know how to please you.

This does not mean you can't talk to him in sentences when you are praising him, he will just love the soft tone of your voice, but if you are annoyed or trying to train him then single words will sink in better.



Please be consistent

**DO** house train him gently, always praise him for relieving himself when and where you want him to, try not to be angry if he has an accident indoors.

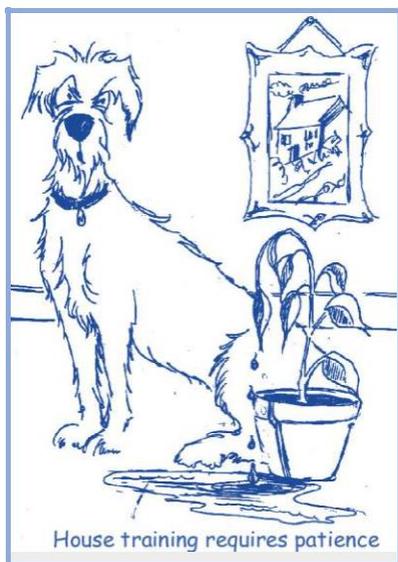
In general, Wolfhounds are very clean and will soon learn what is required.

## **Putting the time in now pays dividends in the future**

**DO** let him know, gently but firmly when he has not pleased you, **BUT**, only when you catch him in the act, it's no good later; he will not remember what he has done to deserve a telling off.

## Don't forget, you can always ask your breeder

For instance, if you leave him unattended for long periods he will become bored and possibly destructive, so if you return to find the kitchen cabinet doors chewed or the control knobs removed from your washer, but he is sleeping or comes to you happily wagging his tail, it's no good shouting at him. He doesn't know what he has done wrong, only that you are angry with him for being happy to see you – please do not confuse him, just love and guide him. Please remember that household objects can also be a danger to your Wolfhound.



This will also apply to an adult who has just joined your family, he will be stressed and confused about the changes in his life, be firm but gentle.

- DO NOT** give him lots of food treats or as a bribe, he will want to please you if you praise him and too many treats between meals can spoil his appetite, it is important that he eats a proper balanced diet from regular meals. Use your common sense about this.
- DO NOT** allow him to push through doorways ahead of you, or rush to the front door if you have a caller, teach him to STAY or WAIT, you go first then he can follow. This will avoid him rushing out into the road or rushing at the caller, albeit to be friendly, but not everyone likes dogs.
- DO NOT** allow young children or teenagers to play rough and tumble games. The child always ends up underneath the dog and thinks this is fun, but the dog is actually being taught to be rough and dominant.

### This won't be his fault, you taught him



- DO NOT** allow him to be taken for walks by children alone who are under 16. If another dog should attack when your dog is trying to be friendly and a fight breaks out a young child or teenager may not be able to control it and someone may be badly injured.

### Adults should always be in control

**DO NOT** ever leave young children and dogs alone. No matter how wonderful this breed is with children and people in general, they are still just dogs, giant ones at that, and accidents can happen.

## You must be responsible at all times

**DO NOT** allow him to push or jump at you when placing his food bowl. Make him STAY OR WAIT before you put his bowl down.

**DO NOT** allow him to climb stairs while he is a puppy. This can and probably will cause damage to his growth, putting too much pressure on his front both going up and coming down the stairs. The damage would be even worse to him and you if he fell down. Put a stair child safety gate at the bottom, keep it there for the first year at least, and eventually when you remove it he will probably never bother to go up them.



Dogs should not be upstairs anyway, their place is downstairs, not in the bedroom, he is your family pet and although you will look upon him as a member of your family, rightly so, remember he is a dog and should know his place in the hierarchy.

No matter how much you love him he should be bottom of the pack with you and your family at the top.

**DO NOT** allow him to mix unsupervised with older, mature dogs, particularly giant breeds until he is at least 15 months old. Rough play with adults can cause damage to immature joints and muscles, which may require corrective surgery. However, free running and play is highly desirable, and good for his physical and mental development. He will break off and rest when he is tired.

## BEDDING

A flat mattress type is best, with removable covers which can be washed and changed regularly. Certainly not bean bags. You should make an area he will know as his own, this is where you should make him go at YOUR meal times, he must learn not to interfere when you are eating.



**Do** leave your puppy or hound of any age in a safe area when you are out or overnight.

If you have other dogs then it is sensible not to leave your new wolfhound alone with them, try and let him sleep where he can see them and they him, but not be together until they are well used to each other. If you have a new puppy you need to be sure he will not annoy the older dogs, particularly if you have a veteran who may not be quite so tolerant anymore. Once he is grown, he and the other dogs will enjoy curling up together.

If you have children, please make sure they understand how important rest is for the young puppy and that he should not be disturbed when he is asleep and this also applies to the adult who should be left alone when sleeping.

## FEEDING

It is best to follow the breeder's recommended regime and diet until he is at least 9 months old, the longer the better.

We are not going to suggest what you should feed. Your breeder will have given you a puppy to adult diet sheet, which you should follow very carefully, particularly if you are not experienced in raising a giant breed, but the following are some common-sense precautions you should consider.

If your puppy is on a highly balanced complete puppy food specially designed for giant breeds, then it is not necessary to supplement with additives such as calcium and vitamins. You may upset the balance of the complete food, which could cause digestive problems, and even lead to problems with bone development. However, there is no harm in giving table scraps or tinned food in limited quantities between main meals. Recent studies have even suggested that in adults it reduces the chances of bloat.

If your breeder is recommending a raw food diet, do take care to follow instructions to the letter, as, unlike with commercial complete diet foods, you will be solely responsible for maintaining the right balance of ingredients to achieve healthy development.

Whatever the feeding regime you must make sure your puppy eats regularly.



### NEVER LEAVE DRY FOOD DOWN FOR SELF SERVICE TYPE FEEDING

After feeding allow him to relieve himself, particularly important before bed time. It is unfair to expect him to hold on for such a long time when he can't ask to be let out, and do not play with him, getting him excited.

Keep him calm and allow him to sleep after meals, although usually you can't stop the very young puppy having a mad 5 minutes after feeding then suddenly crashing out, this is typical, but when older or adult it is important to keep them calm around feeding time, this can also help to avoid bloat which is a dangerous condition.

## See Bloat under Health Issues Section

Repeat your breeders recommended feeding regime at the suggested times. Once served leave it down for 15 minutes if not eaten remove it throw away and do not feed again until the next due meal.

Please remember to

**HAVE A FEEDING REGIME WITH YOUR PUPPY AND STICK TO IT.**

They do learn the rules very quickly provided you stick to them with a good routine, and will probably end up being the epitome of good manners, and you will be so proud.



It is recommended by many breeders that the food bowl should be raised up off the floor, they feel this can help with digestive problems, although there is a school of thought that it is better to feed from ground level.

Speak to your breeder about this.

You must increase his food weekly otherwise he could be undernourished. If feeding a complete food then the food bag does give some guidelines, but usually they do require more in the bowl than stated, but you can see how the increase must be gradual.

Some people add more when they see the bowl has been cleared of food, this might work for some dogs, but not all because some dogs always leave a few crumbs, so these dogs, although not necessarily hungry, could be undernourished, certainly initially anyway. You can't make it up later if the puppy is not properly fed.

A saying often heard from farmers "half the pedigree goes down the throat" This means good food right from the start, and enough to keep him well covered and promote good bone growth.

### You cannot make it up later



Please do not give titbits/scraps from your table. Remember he will soon be able to help himself from your work-top, let alone the table and your lives will be a misery, particularly at meal times and so will his if you do not teach him from the first day

**DO NOT** offer special foods to tempt, you must be in charge; you decide what he will eat. Only in very rare situations will a dog starve himself. Do not feed too many titbits between meals; you must get the puppy onto a proper daily routine.

Usually at about 5 months you can go down to 3 meals remember to increase the portion sizes adding in the amount of the meal you have cut and continue to increase daily amount as he grows.

At about 10 months to 12 months you can go down to 2 meals. Only decide this if puppy is well covered. If you think he will benefit from 3 meals for a little longer, (maybe he is going through a growth spurt), he will need the extra nourishment for a little longer. You can try again in a month or so, depending on what food you are feeding. He should always be well covered as a puppy and throughout his life.

You should consult your breeder regarding the actual food and feeding regime, the above are only guidelines.

## Keep him fit not fat

For the adult, you should be able to find his ribs but not see them and when looking along his back he should have a waist, not a very exaggerated one, then he would be too thin, but there should be definition. Sausage like bodies do not look attractive and fat is not good for your dog. He should also be well muscled, which will usually naturally build up gradually in the puppy/teenager, but the young adult and older hound will only keep or develop good muscular condition from good food and regular exercise.

The adult dog will continue on 2 meals per day for his life.

## Fussy Eaters

If you are unlucky and the new puppy or adult becomes finicky with his food, then it is best to sort this out as soon as possible and applying the following common-sense guidelines usually works. He needs to be hungry to appreciate his food and once his eating habits are sorted he should never look back.

Starve for 24 hours NO TITBITS

Next day half cup (tea cup not his normal measuring cup) of normal food for breakfast the same again at supper, = just 2 meals this day

2<sup>nd</sup> day three quarters of a tea cup but feed his normal regime, either 2-3 or 4 meals depending on his age

3rd day Full tea cup serve it at normal feeding times. STILL NO TITBITS

4<sup>th</sup> day now onto half to three quarters of your normal measuring cup of food serve at normal feeding times

Next day and so on now gradually increase to his correct amount and he shouldn't look back, taking about 5 to 6 days to get him back to normal amount and feeding regime.

It is up to you to decide what he eats, remember he ate this food with his litter mates so no reason to suddenly decide he doesn't like it, do not allow him to call the tune. He will be healthier and happier if you guide him from the beginning, he will thrive from knowing the rules.

## Exercise



For the puppy or the older hound who may not be fit, not too much or too little. They must have exercise for healthy development both mentally and physically. No roadwork until well grown and for the older hound, build it up gradually to suit his fitness levels.

The small puppy should just be allowed to play in the garden at his own pace, he will stop when he is tired, BUT, if you have other dogs or young children, then you must monitor him. He should NOT be allowed to run around the garden all day; he needs rest, plenty of it. Food, rest and grow.

There are many reasons why you should be careful not to allow the young puppy too much exercise or free running around.

### Some are:

He will run his food off; too much adrenalin using up energy and food value and he may not develop properly

He can cause trauma damage to his bones, Osteochondrosis, and particularly **Osteochondritis dissecans (OCD)** - a chip off the cartilage, also known as footballer's knee, is a danger to large and giant breeds, and one of the causes is too much exercise which can result in accidental damage (trauma).

It can also cause the front feet to point east and west instead of straight forward, (incorrect feeding can also contribute to this), although too much running around seems to be the main contributory factor.

Do not take him for long walks, or road walking which we call pavement pounding; this will ruin him and his legs. This type of exercise can come later when he is fully grown.

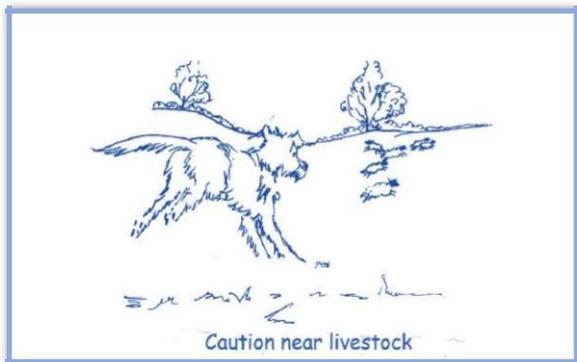
Wolfhounds generally do not enjoy pavement pounding anyway, this is boring, they are really only happy when free running, or galloping, but in a safe area. The problem is that they do not have a say in what you decide, so you have to think about their requirements very carefully.

## Lead Training

You do need to lead train him which can be done in the garden, but once he has had all his vaccinations he can be taken out somewhere interesting, perhaps you will need to drive him somewhere, BUT when you arrive exercise under control and only for 5 minutes at a time each day, he needs to enjoy it, but beware of damage to his soft bones running over uneven ground.

It is a good time to teach him to be biddable, also you can never rely on a hunting hound to come when called so you must try and instil this into him from the very first. You must always remember that Wolfhounds can kill sheep, deer and other small dogs and cats, if not under control.

Before you let your dog off the lead, you must feel secure that he will come when called, make sure it is a safe area away from livestock or maybe even small dogs. If he has not been socialized well, or if a new adult Wolfhound who has just joined your family, be careful, and be in control. This is when a good strong extending lead is useful, for a new adult it gives you the time to train before taking the plunge and allowing him to be off the lead.



Build up formal exercise very gradually.

As a guide:

5 minutes until 4 months.

10 minutes at 5 months

15 minutes at 6 months

Take the time to drive to the dog exercise area used locally, let him see the other dogs he will be mixing with and for them to see him, just stay for 10 minutes, do not let him off the lead for a long time yet, although if you have an extending lead this is a good way to train him to come when called and let him go again.

These guidelines for exercising and socialising are also suitable if you have an unfit adult join your family.

Following this introduction method, particularly for the puppy, is a good idea so he can make friends. Also, if you have a new adult in your household then this is a good way for the local dogs to get used to seeing him and you can assess what he is like with other dogs.

If you have a puppy then this way the other dogs who regularly exercise here will be happy to play when he is the fully grown giant wolfhound; rather than turning up one day with an unknown giant of a dog, and you know the saying "attack is the best form of defence", you don't want these smaller dogs taking that attitude and putting your happy hound on edge.

Obviously for the older dog that is new to your home you will have to be very cautious, giving you time to assess his reaction to other dogs.

### Do not take any risks



If the older puppy or your new adult is causing problems with lead training, then try a Halti or head collar available from most good pet stores.

This is a safe and gentle form of control, although it is advisable to also have a loose slip neck chain to clip to as well, just in case he slips the head collar.

Once he is at least 18 months old he will need a daily gallop in a safe area. Ideally a good walk there, then playing and running around for at least 30 minutes, then the walk back home. This regime, on a daily basis or at least 4 times a week, will keep him fit and healthy both mentally and physically, but remember to be in control.

If you have ring-craft/obedience training classes in your area, it is a good idea to take your puppy or older hound along to socialise him, this will benefit him a great deal. It is important that your puppy or adult is happy with dogs he meets in other situations.

For the unfit older hound, the above guidelines of gradually building up from 10 minutes daily and increasing it will help him become fit and so enjoy longer walks and free running in a safe area.

## Health Issues

Anaesthetic is to be avoided in Irish Wolfhounds, as with other sight hounds, except when absolutely necessary.

### Anaesthesia and Surgery

The body weight of a sight hound is mostly muscle and bone so they will require far less anaesthetic than say a St Bernard of the same weight, whose weight is made up of body fat which absorbs anaesthetic better. If a Wolfhound receives the same amount of anaesthetic as a St Bernard it could kill him.

Use of sedatives/anaesthetics has been known to cause problems in sight hounds, speak to your breeder for information and do not be afraid to ask your vet's advice about anaesthetic

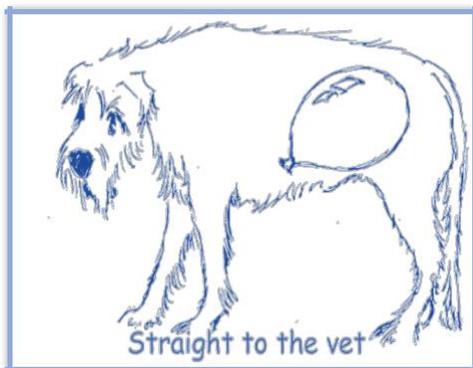
### **Irish Wolfhounds are still dying from overdoses of anaesthetic**

### Bloat (Gastric Dilatation Volvulus)

Bloat is when a dog's stomach inflates with gas and fluid and rotates, cutting off the blood supply to it and the spleen.

It is a very serious and life-threatening condition so recognising it quickly is extremely important.

**THIS IS AN EMERGENCY! YOU  
MUST GET YOUR DOG TO THE  
VETS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**



Deep chested dogs are the most prone to this problem.

## **Bloat - The First Signs can be any or all of the following:**

Swelling of the abdomen (particularly on the left side) and tender	
Stomach sounds like a 'drum' when tapped	
Un-productive vomiting may bring up foam but no food	
Anxiety	Salivating
Whining for no apparent reason	Dark Red gums (pale in late stages)
Restlessness and pacing, standing with head down	Lack of normal 'gurgling' sounds from stomach

## **Possible Causes**

Rapid Eating - (can cause gulping of air)	Genetic pre-disposition
Exercising vigorously before or immediately after a meal	
Drinking a large amount of water too quickly - (can cause gulping of air)	
Stresses such as travel, fear, bitches in season etc.	

## **Suggestions for Avoiding Bloat**

Don't feed after exercising. Let an hour pass before and after feeding	Consider splitting the daily feed over 2 meals
Don't let the dog gulp large amounts of water after exercising	Avoid stress
Avoid the dog drinking a large amount of water too quickly	
If feeding a dry complete food, always ensure it does not swell when soaked as it will do this in the stomach of the dog	
Soak a small amount of the food to ascertain whether it will swell or simply soften	
If your dog gulps his food, consider using a specially designed food bowl or placing a large stone in the centre of the feed bowl (to fill one quarter the area of the bowl). This can slow the dogs eating down as he negotiates the stone.	
If a meal is missed better to give less at the next meal, do not try to make up for the missed meal, this is more likely to cause problems	

**For more detailed information and to download the guide, please go to our website:**

[http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/files/GUIDE-bloat\\_087036dj.pdf](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/files/GUIDE-bloat_087036dj.pdf)



## Blood Repository/DNA Storage Programme

The IWHG has set up a Blood Repository in partnership with the Animal Health Trust (AHT). This is specifically for Irish Wolfhounds to establish a DNA database to help research into conditions affecting the breed.

This is a very exciting and important development for the future of our breed and we would urge breeders/owners to submit blood samples from their hounds in order that we may all benefit from this in the future.

The IWHG has agreed a protocol with the AHT and this is explained on our website. There is also a form that can be downloaded to attach to any blood samples submitted. We have agreed the data derived from the use of the DNA samples in research is to be used for the benefit of dogs only and not commercial organisations seeking to use the information for other purposes.

**As with all such projects, all information provided will be confidential.**

In the UK, blood cannot be taken purely for research purposes, but only as surplus if taking blood samples for medical purposes. So, if your dog is undergoing any investigation that involves a blood sample, for example Livershunt testing puppies, ask your vet to keep any surplus bloods and send them in.

It is quite straightforward and instructions are on the website. If puppies being Livershunt tested are not yet KC registered or microchipped, they can be identified initially by the breeder in the usual way and then once they are KC registered/chipped, those details can be notified to the AHT by the breeder.

All the breeder then has to do is notify puppy owners that the puppy's blood has been submitted to the AHT for future reference and should there be a change in the status of the dog's health later in its life, they should notify the AHT by submitting a form that can also be downloaded from the website.

We hope you will support the scheme. For more information or enquiries, please contact:

**Maura Lyons**

[researchcoordinator@iwhealthgroup.co.uk](mailto:researchcoordinator@iwhealthgroup.co.uk)

**website:**

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

If we can store litter information in this way, it is very valuable when trying to monitor and establish a disease's development and mode of inheritance.

This is a crucial development in the research already ongoing for Osteosarcoma and Heart disease

## Bursas - swellings (fluid filled) around joints

These are quite common in the growing Wolfhound. They form as a protection for joints and are commonly caused by the hound crashing down onto a hard floor. Bursas are mainly seen on elbows but can also form on the pelvis and hocks.

Pelvic bursas come and go very quickly, sometimes in a matter of a couple of weeks and usually do not require any attention.

Elbow bursas can take months, but will eventually go of their own accord, however daily massaging can help prevent the bursa becoming hard and homeopathic treatments are also thought to work, (see below).

It is rare for them to require attention, but very occasionally they can become infected and become hard making the dog slightly lame, seek your vet's advice about treatment, but draining should be avoided, usually antibiotics sort out the infection.

It is not recommended to remove them and if your vet suggests it, get a second opinion. Speak to your breeder, or if not available, one of the contact names on the back page.

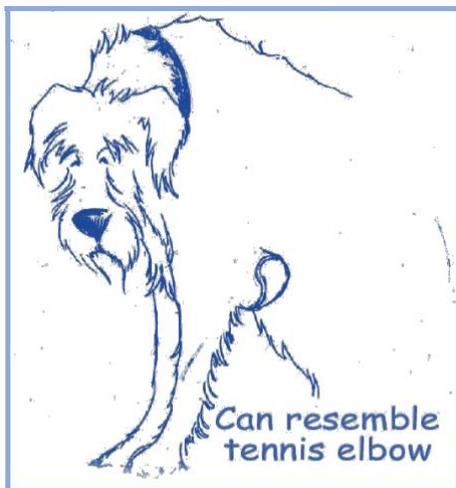
Homeopathic treatments for bursas are considered by some to be very successful, helping to drain the fluid away.

If you are considering using this method, it is very important to use the correct remedy, so it is advisable to seek the advice of a homeopathic vet, a list for the UK can be found at <http://www.bahvs.com>

## Fleas and Ticks

If you live in an area where ticks are a problem then you should speak to your vet, there are treatments available. Fleas are easy to deal with and there are treatments which stop fleas attacking in the first place.

Some people recommend Garlic powder added to the food.



## Heart Disease

Irish wolfhounds have a relatively high prevalence of cardiac dysfunction, some of which is inherited. This is why it is important to test regularly from the age of 2, or before being used for breeding, (see next item for details). If you are aware of a heart condition before your dog shows symptoms, you are in the best possible position to preserve its quality of life.

The most common abnormality is Atrial Fibrillation (AF) a heart rhythm disturbance. About 12% of Wolfhounds will develop AF, but can be asymptomatic with no obvious problems for a number of years before needing medication, but they will need regular monitoring. Not all cases of AF will progress to Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM), but many will. DCM is a progressive disease of the heart muscle where it is unable to contract normally, the muscles stretch and thin and the heart gets bigger and increasingly inefficient. Most wolfhounds with DCM will progress to Congestive Heart Failure (CHF).

If your dog is diagnosed with heart disease, although serious, this does not automatically mean that you are about to lose your wolfhound. As with humans, many dogs are able to live relatively happy and healthy lives despite their condition when early diagnosis occurs and proper treatment is administered.

Most of the treatment options available focus upon fixing irregular heartbeats, increasing the amount of blood that the heart pumps with each beat, and reducing the build-up of fluid that this condition often causes in the lungs and abdomen.

### **Symptoms of Heart Disease can include:**

- Lack of appetite
- Weight loss
- Lack of energy
- Pale gums

Non-productive coughing

Fast and irregular breathing –i.e. over 40 breaths per minute when at rest.

Check your dog's breathing rate. It's best to do this while your dog is sleeping. The normal respiratory rate for dogs is 10 to 30 breaths per minute, although dogs that are panting during vigorous activity can breathe up to 200 pants per minute (that's why you should check for your dog's breathing when he is asleep).

- Increased heart rate – it is useful to know what your dog's normal resting heart rate is.
- The normal heart rate of a wolfhound is between 80 to 100 beats per minute. And if they are excited or exercising not more than 140 beats per minute for long periods

of time. The best area of your dog's body to check his heart rate is at the left side of his chest, at the spot where his elbow can touch if it is raised. Place your hand over this spot; if you have a stethoscope that will make it much easier for you. Count the number of beats his heart makes for 15 seconds, then multiply that number by 4.

- Abdominal Swelling – not to be confused with the tense, distended stomach of bloat – this is fluid filled and often described as looking 'guppy'.
- Fainting

We have produced a detailed Guide to recognising and dealing with Heart Disease in your Irish Wolfhound and this can be downloaded from our website here:

[www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/files/GUIDE-heart.pdf](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/files/GUIDE-heart.pdf)

## Heart Testing

The IWHG organise regional heart testing sessions in the UK and Ireland, so there should be one within reach of you. It is recommended that all wolfhounds are heart tested annually from the age of 2 years, using the three-stage screening of Auscultation (stethoscope), Echocardiogram Ultrasound (scanning) and ECG. Any one method on its own does not guarantee that a dog is free of the condition. An annual test is recommended and an up to date screening required if a dog or bitch is to be used for breeding.

Picking up on a potential problem early on can make all the difference in the success of any treatment needed. Our screening sessions are available to all at a very low cost and the data generated is recorded for ongoing research.

Details can be found on our website

<http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/dates-and-locations-.html%20%20>

Bookings can be made online or through [hearttestbooking@iwhealthgroup.co.uk](mailto:hearttestbooking@iwhealthgroup.co.uk)

If you have any queries, do ask your breeder or one of the contact names on the back page about regular heart testing. It is great to know your dog is in good health and your breeder will be keen to be kept up to date on any health issues.

## Lumps

**Lumps** on any part of the dog should be checked by your vet as soon as noticed.

## Pneumonia

### **THIS IS AN EMERGENCY! YOU MUST GET YOUR DOG TO THE VETS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**

Wolfhounds have a greater predisposition to pneumonia than other breeds and they are unique in their presentation. Being aware of the potential symptoms is critical and also making sure your vet is aware of the condition in the breed is important. If pneumonia is suspected, time is of the essence.

The Irish Wolfhound Health Group has put together a Guide to Pneumonia in response to a growing number of misdiagnoses and misunderstanding of the condition in the breed. There are two versions, one for owners and one for vets – we would encourage you to go to the website and download them and familiarise yourself and your vet with them: <http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/files/GUIDE-pneumonia.pdf>

Don't wait till you have an emergency.

### **Recognising Pneumonia:**

Wolfhounds may appear symptomatic: They may have a normal temperature and their lungs may appear clear on x-rays.

- Sudden onset.
- Difficulties in breathing.
- Head lowered and stretched forward level with the back, neck extended to expand the airway as much as possible.
- Dog reluctant/unable to lie on its side.
- Dog may or may not be coughing.
- Temperature may be very high — but a normal temperature does not necessarily preclude a diagnosis of pneumonia.
- Their lungs may appear clear on x-ray.
- There have been cases of pneumonia in wolfhounds following a lungworm infection. (Lungworm is no longer restricted to the south of England, and is present in most areas)

## Treating Pneumonia:

- THIS IS URGENT- if there is any doubt, treat with the antibiotics first, and argue later — do not take a wait and see attitude
- Most Vets will want to administer an antibiotic intravenously, as it is important to hit it hard and fast
- Fluids, intravenously should be considered—but care should be taken if your wolfhound has a heart condition
- Drug treatment needs to continue for at least 4 weeks
- Steam and Coupage (manual percussion of the ribcage) can assist in moving the congestion in the lungs

Unfortunately, if your dog has had pneumonia, it is more likely to get it again.

## Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA)

This is one of the breed's success stories as the incidence in the breed is extremely low and we have not had a case for many years now. This is due to the vigilance and sharing of information within the breed as this is a condition with a known mode of inheritance and a knowledge of which pedigree combinations might risk producing it.

PRA is an inherited disease of the retina, in which the eyes are genetically programmed to go blind. It has been termed 'night blindness' because this is the first thing that happens – the dogs cannot see at night.

In the latter stages of the disease the dog's daytime vision will also deteriorate. PRA occurs in both eyes simultaneously, but is non painful, though as the dog is going blind it can be distressing for both dog and owner. However, dogs do generally adapt very well once they have gone blind and with careful management.

In Irish Wolfhounds the condition manifests when the dog is an adult at around 2 years.

For more information on PRA please go to:

[www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/files/GUIDE-PRA\\_8a00pwq1.pdf](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk/files/GUIDE-PRA_8a00pwq1.pdf)

## Tail damage

This is a common injury and can happen if the hound continually hits the tip of his tail on the corners of furniture, door frames or mesh fencing. Even worse, if he should break his tail, this may require amputation at the break.

It is important to try to avoid this; it is very painful for the dog and bad for your interior décor! If the tail is damaged it bleeds profusely leaving bloody splatters and or bloody brush marks all over the walls and furniture.

You must get veterinary attention quickly. Many breeders find Preparation H (Pile cream) very successful because it dries up the wound very quickly, just as long as he does not continue to hit his tail on obstructions or licks or bites at it.

Be very careful about bandaging, if it is too tight it will compromise the blood supply and the tail will die from the point the bandage starts. It is best to leave the end open so fresh air can circulate

In addition, the dog can chew and swallow the bandage causing a blockage, which if not spotted can kill the dog.

For this reason, a soft muzzle or a veterinary head collar is recommended when you are not with your dog and overnight, so the dog cannot chew the bandage or continually lick his tail.

A muzzle can be more comfortable than a head collar which many dogs hate, and a soft muzzle still allows the dog to lap water, USE ONLY FOR SHORT PERIODS OR OVERNIGHT. Some trial and error will decide the best action.

There are now several different tail protectors on the market that can help cover the dressing and help prevent further damage.

Contact your breeder who will no doubt have come across this problem and will be able to advise.

## Teeth

Keep them clean and healthy. Bacteria from bad teeth and gums can enter the system and can cause heart disease.

## Torsion – See Bloat

## Worms

Regular worming is absolutely essential. There are many treatments available; speak to your vet.

## General Hints

**Raggers, Rolled Socks, Soft Toys, Balls of String** - It is not recommended to give these to your dog, whether puppy or adult. In fact, nothing which he can chew bits off, swallow and cause an obstruction. If you are lucky and spot an obstruction in time it usually requires major surgery, otherwise it can be fatal.

**Soft plastic or furry toys with squeaks inside** – the squeaks should be removed at all costs. Only give them solid rubber or hard solid plastic play things, these will usually survive a wolfhound's jaws. No balls smaller than a tennis ball, which should be solid, not hollow as they can bite bits off.

**And none of these toys without supervision** - This also applies to cordless and mobile phones, remote controls, shoes and children's toys etc.

**Collars and Neck chains - Never leave pups or adult dogs alone when they are wearing collars** or worse still, check chains, strangulation is a real possibility.

**Cooked Bones, particularly chicken** - Never give these, because they splinter and can cause internal problems.

**Wolfhounds do like to help** - so keep well away when mowing the lawn, cutting the hedge, strimming or practicing your golf swing!

**If you have any problems** – If it is a life-threatening emergency, your vet is your first port of call. Otherwise, contact your breeder, and if not available, one of the contact names on the back page. Often a problem is something which can be sorted by advice, change of regime/feeding or a growth phase not understood by the first-time owner.



As well as any other breed of dog, Irish Wolfhounds can suffer health problems.

Sadly, at some point we all lose our hounds, but your contribution in passing on any information that led to your hound dying at whatever age, could be of great value to those trying to improve the health of our breed.

In addition to the DNA Storage Programme we also have other breed specific research projects that need your support – in particular the AHT's study into Osteosarcoma (Bone Cancer) in the Irish Wolfhound and the Nottingham Veterinary School's Osteosarcoma and Heart Disease Studies.

All require DNA cheek swabs to be taken, which is easy, non-invasive and inexpensive.

If you would like your Wolfhound to make a valuable contribution to these or any other studies we are involved in, please contact

Maura Lyons,  
e-mail: [researchcoordinator@iwhealthgroup.co.uk](mailto:researchcoordinator@iwhealthgroup.co.uk)

Or go to the website [www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk](http://www.iwhealthgroup.co.uk) for more information and downloadable forms

## And Finally, ...

Enjoy your new Irish Wolfhound, he will bring a lot of joy to your life and become a much loved member of your family.

And as with all family members, please bear in mind that you may need to make provision for him should something happen to you.

Do your neighbours know what to do if you don't arrive home?

Do they have a number to call for someone who understands the breed and who could look after yours if you were suddenly hospitalized?

Please take a few minutes to make some provision now.

Let a family member or good friend know what you would like to happen to your pets, if the worst should happen to you.

Why not ask your breeder if there are any other Wolfhound owners in your area, or talk to the Irish Wolfhound Rescue Trust?

Reputable Irish Wolfhound breeders, who are usually also members of one, two, or all of the breed clubs, normally enter into an agreement with new owners that they should be contacted if the owners find they need help and advice, or can no longer keep their Irish Wolfhound.

If you have mislaid your contact names or telephone numbers or did not have an agreement, then please contact any of the following:

<p>Irish Wolfhound Club (GB mainland excluding NI) Secretary, Debbie Treadwell Tel: 07855 663697 email: <a href="mailto:irishwolfhoundclub.secretary@hotmail.com">irishwolfhoundclub.secretary@hotmail.com</a></p> <p>Irish Wolfhound Society (GB mainland excluding NI) Secretary: Joan Williams Tel: 01634 660181 email: <a href="mailto:joan@mail.ip-technology.com">joan@mail.ip-technology.com</a></p> <p>Irish Wolfhound Club of Scotland Secretary: Donna Hanlon Tel: 07979 452817 email: <a href="mailto:donna.hanlon1@btinternet.com">donna.hanlon1@btinternet.com</a></p> <p>Irish Wolfhound Club of Northern Ireland Secretary: Marion Finney Tel: 00 353 1 8078993 email: <a href="mailto:gulliagh@gmail.com">gulliagh@gmail.com</a></p>	<p>If you need to rehome your Wolfhound and have lost your breeder's contact details then please contact the Irish Wolfhound Rescue Trust for help and advice.</p> <p>Irish Wolfhound Rescue (England, Scotland and Wales) Secretary: Tel: 01993 868118 email: <a href="mailto:irishwolfhoundrescue@gmail.com">irishwolfhoundrescue@gmail.com</a></p> <p>Irish Wolfhound Rescue (Northern Ireland) Contact: Marion Finney Tel: 00 353 1 8078993 email: <a href="mailto:gulliagh@gmail.com">gulliagh@gmail.com</a></p>
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Our website address:

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

And you can find us on Facebook: Irish Wolfhound Health Group (Public Group)

## Contacts

Chairman:	Jean Timmins	<a href="mailto:chairman@iwhealthgroup.co.uk">chairman@iwhealthgroup.co.uk</a>
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