

# THE Irish Wolfhound Foundation



# Focus

Summer 2011

## *The Irish Wolfhound Foundation, Inc.*

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## *Focus*

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## What can I do to help?

Include the Foundation in your annual giving program. With your help, we will continue to build on these studies, and to offer programs that inform, educate, and inspire the caretakers of the breed. Include the Foundation in your planned giving. Your bequest or other donation will help us establish a self-perpetuating source of income designated for Irish Wolfhound health research, education, and rescue. Participate in the health programs and studies sponsored by the Foundation, showing your commitment to a healthy future for our hounds. Get involved!

The Irish Wolfhound Foundation was incorporated in January, 2002, fulfilling a long-time dream of the IWCA Board of Directors to establish a tax-exempt, non-profit

charitable organization, classified as a 501(c)(3) under the Internal Revenue Service code. Discussion of the Foundation began in 1990, when the late Mrs. Peter Van Brunt bequeathed \$10,000 to the IWCA. The IWCA wisely set aside this gift (which would later be known as the Riverlawn Fund), and today, it makes up the operating capital of the IWF. The Irish Wolfhound Founda-

tion will accumulate funds from gifts and contributions to create a self-perpetuating source of income specifically designated for Irish Wolfhound Rescue, Education, and Research. The mission of the IWF is facilitated by its officers and directors, who serve on a strictly volunteer basis. All contributions to the Foundation are tax-deductible, and any individual, family, or organization contributing to the Foundation will receive the Foundation's newsletter. All gifts will be acknowledged with a receipt.

Make checks payable to: The Irish Wolfhound Foundation, Inc and mail to : David Milne, Treasurer, 150 Creek Rd Phillipsburg, NJ 08865. Please include your name, address, city, state, zip code, country and email address.



## Important Reminder

A reminder that the Irish Wolfhound Foundation's membership year runs from July 1 to June 30. We have accomplished much this last year but there is much we still need to do. Please help make this our best membership year ever by joining or renewing today. Many people making this small gesture of support can accomplish a lot for our hounds! You can join online at our iwffoundation.org website or use the form included on page 7 of the newsletter.

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# Cardiac Disease in the Irish Wolfhound



William D. Tyrrell, Jr., DVM, Diplomate, ACVIM (Cardiology), presented a seminar sponsored by the Irish Wolfhound Foundation as part of the Irish Wolfhound Club of America's national specialty show's educational events in Geneva, NY. Dr. Tyrrell's talk covered a general description of heart disease in dogs in general and Irish Wolfhounds in particular (see the article on last year's talk for detailed information on that subject), updates on the progress of the IWF's current studies involving cardiology, and heart testing and breeding considerations for the IW community.

The good news coming out of Dr. Tyrrell's studies is that he is finding a much lower percentage of cardiac disease than has been found in other studies on IWs, and that Atrial Fibrillation (A-Fib) is turning out to be a manageable condition that often does not progress to more serious heart disease in IWs.

One possible explanation for the difference in heart disease occurrence in Dr. Tyrrell's studies is that the population in

the studies differs. For example, in Andrea Vollmar's retrospective study of 500 IWs, the dogs were all patients at veterinary hospitals, so one would expect a higher incidence of cardiac problems in dogs who are already ill. The studies being conducted by Dr. Tyrrell for the IWF are being conducted on dogs at specialties, who are more representative of the general population. One other possibility is that his population is younger, as the incidence of A-Fib and other heart problems increases with age. His study on the results from simultaneous EKGs and echocardiograms has included 221 dogs through the end of 2010, with a goal of 500 to complete the study. He would especially like to have more senior hounds in this study to make sure that the lower incidence of disease is not simply due to younger hounds in this study as compared to the Vollmar study. (Note: *please consider bringing your mature dogs to the next IWF heart testing clinic so Dr. Tyrrell can complete his research!*)

Dr. Tyrrell also reported on the progress

of the IWF's Lifetime Cardiac Study (LCS), which is nearing the end of its active phase. 1,266 dogs were enrolled in this study, but unfortunately 743 of those did not follow up with annual updates throughout the life of the hound. (As an aside, we would love to see that number get smaller! Ideally we would have had annual echocardiograms as part of our data, but we also need those final questionnaires telling us about health problems and cause of death. If you had a hound in the LCS and don't remember giving us a final update, please contact Frances Abrams of the Foundation via email at [Frances.abrams@att.net](mailto:Frances.abrams@att.net), or Dr. Tyrrell at

(CARDIAC DISEASE Continued on Page 4)

## Why Test for Hip Dysplasia?

by Mary O'Malley

I had a conversation at the National this year with someone who is thinking of breeding her bitch, and she told me that she didn't need to test hips because her breeder had assured her that there was no hip dysplasia in that line. I beg to differ. Not because I know anything specific about those dogs, but because I don't believe anyone can know that a specific dog is free of dysplasia without testing, and because we all share a small gene pool. In the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) database there are 1,646 IWs with hips tested from 1974 through 2010. Of those, only 5.1% were rated dysplastic. Nothing like the shocking number for Bulldogs in that time period (72.6% were dysplastic!), but not zero. X-raying to identify hip dysplasia is a modern invention, so hip dysplasia occurring today could have

come from any combination of untested shared ancestors (it is believed to be polygenetic in inheritance). Unfortunately for determining breedability, hip dysplasia is not always symptomatic, which makes it pos-



Holly

Photo by Mary O'Malley

sible for a normal-looking and moving dog to pass dysplastic genes to another generation if breeders assume that dog's hips must be fine. So I will share my own experience with hip dysplasia in an Irish Wolfhound, in the hopes that it may convince more people that we really do need to test for this disease in our breed if we want to keep our number of affected dogs low.

I obtained a bitch named Holly in 2007 with the idea that she would produce my first litter when the time came. She wasn't (and isn't) perfect, but she was a pretty bitch with a nice pedigree and I knew many of the IWs behind her. She had a great temperament and as far as I could tell was healthy. I wanted to be sure, so I arranged to test her heart, hips, elbows and eyes after she turned

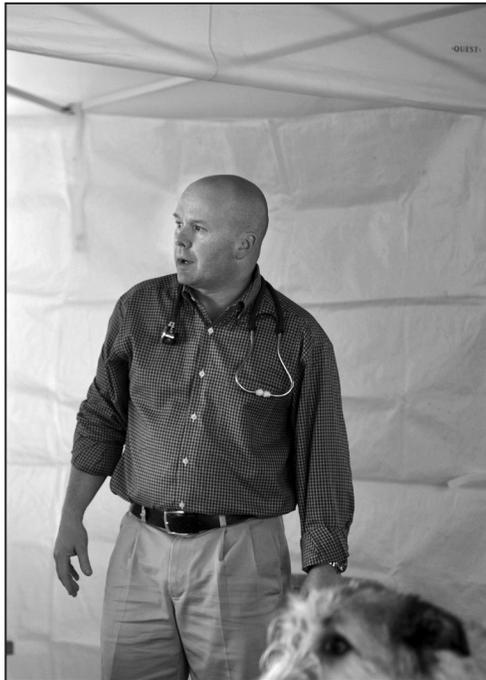
(HIP DYSPLASIA Continued on Page 4)



# Irish Wolfhound National Echo Clinic 2011 Fingerlakes, NY

A total of 56 dogs participated in the IWF sponsored health testing. Twenty dogs had normal findings, three with Lone AF, four with DCM, and two with VPC's.

A special thanks to Dr William D. Tyrell J. DVM, DACVIM (Cardiology), Frances Abrams, Mariellen Dentino, and all the other volunteers for their dedication and hard work. And of course kudos to everyone who participated with their hounds and especially those people who brought their older dogs to be tested.



## A Word From the President

It seems like I just got back from last year's National Specialty and here we are with another that has come and gone. A great event overall, I commend this year's show committee working with less than ideal weather conditions for the duration of the show.

The Foundation was there in force again offering health testing for our hounds. I would like to thank Dr. William Tyrell, Frances Abrams, & Mariellen Dentino for their dedication and hard work in gathering much needed data for the life Time Cardiac Study. Dr. Tyrell repeated his well received presentation again this year on heart issues within our breed and medication options.

A big thank you to Dick & Jane Staudt for hauling the gift shop inventory to the show site from Vermont, setting it up, and selling merchandise, an arduous task to say the least! I would like to thank the Irish Wolfhound Club of America for providing us (IWF) the opportunity to be a part of this event, including the IWF in the fundraising opportunities through the live auction. The IWF will receive 40% of the proceeds as a donation from the IWCA.

As always, I would like to thank each and every one of you that contributes to our breed, not only in terms of giving money, but time and labor. Just think, every IW event that you attend has been organized by a group of dedicated folks (AKA Volunteers) that work very hard to showcase our breed. Be it at a specialty, or a club function, these events don't just happen.

The IWF mission of Health, Education, & Rescue is being realized more and more every year, I encourage all to roll up their sleeves, put aside the personal differences, and help with the common cause, the future of our breed.

*Respectfully,  
Doug Marx – IWF President*



## 2010 Financial Report

<b>Year-end Balances</b>	<b>Amount</b>	
Unrestricted, Health Research, Rescue, and Education	\$123,347.40	
General Endowment	\$27,380.71	
Rescue Endowment	\$15,908.13	
Total Accounts	\$166,636.24	
<b>Donations</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>% of all donations</b>
Unrestricted - "where need is greatest" or unspecified (includes auction, Gift Shop/Boutique proceeds)	\$21,921.03	48%
Health Research	\$9,969.00	22%
Rescue	\$490.00	1%
Education	\$15.00	0%
Membership Donations	\$1,803.00	4%
General Endowment (includes a substantial bequest)	\$8,157.89	18%
Rescue Endowment (includes a substantial bequest)	\$3,000.00	7%
Total Donations	\$45,355.92	100%
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>% of all expenses</b>
Health Research (includes \$10K for IW Studies at University of Pennsylvania)	\$27,435.87	78%
General	\$2,089.78	6%
Rescue	\$697.00	2%
Education (includes newsletters)	\$1,822.23	5%
Gift Shop/Boutique/Website (includes one-time redesign cost)	\$3,048.00	9%
Total Expenses	\$35,093.58	100%

# Cardiac Disease

(Continued from Page 2)

Chesapeake Cardiologists via <http://www.cvcavets.com/>.

Thus far the LCS has revealed no change in the average lifespan of Irish Wolfhounds, which still stands at 6.7 years for those dogs on whom we have complete lifespan information. Cancer is still the leading killer of Irish Wolfhounds, with heart disease as the second leading killer. Below is a chart showing the mortality data collected from the LCS to-date:

IWF Lifetime Cardiac Study Mortality Data

Cause of Death	Count	Count %	Avg. Age in Months
Bloat/Torsion	24	5	69
Cancer – Total	139	28.9	80.8
Heart	78	16.2	87.8
Rear Paralysis	16	3.3	100.9
Renal	10	2.1	77.3
Respiratory	18	3.7	76.7
Sudden Death	8	1.7	64.4
Other	84	17.5	76.6
Unknown	15	3.1	70.1
No answer	89	18.5	99.8

Dr. Tyrrell also discussed testing and breeding considerations. It is still too early in his EKG/Echocardiogram study to say definitively if an EKG alone is a sufficient screening tool for breeding stock. The majority of dogs with DCM do have A-Fib as well (which can be seen on an EKG), but there is a percentage who have normal EKGs and only show heart disease on an echocardiogram. While Dr. Tyrrell prefers to be conservative in breeding recommendations (it is clearly safer to breed only dogs who have no evidence of heart disease), it is his opinion that late onset A-fib in an IW with long-lived ancestors should not mandate removing the dog or its offspring from the breeding pool.

Nor does he recommend removing siblings of affected dogs from a breeding program, particularly as our gene pool is not that big that we can afford to remove many apparently healthy dogs from that gene pool. Breeding dogs should have an annual EKG and echocardiogram, especially since the chances of heart abnormalities increase with age. The ARCH certification program requires this and that it be performed by a Board-certified Cardiologist to find both congenital and adult-onset heart

disease, while OFA accepts a one-time auscultation/focused cardiac physical examination performed by any veterinarian as evidence of a congenitally healthy heart and does not look at adult onset disease, which is the major concern in the Irish Wolfhound. OFA and ARCH are now in talks to possibly merge their data and agree on requirements for future heart screening. Someone asked about the Antech Pro-BNP test for heart hormones as a screening tool. Dr. Tyrrell's opinion is that it is not useful, as it produces many false alarms. An EKG and echocardiogram continue to be the "gold standard" for heart testing.

Dr. Tyrrell and the IWF have several tasks to complete in the immediate future:

- Complete data on Lifetime Cardiac Study
- Complete ventricular premature beat study
- Continue to further investigate congenital heart defect prevalence in the IW
- Continue to investigate significance of acquired valvular disease in the IW
- Need to further document whether an EKG is adequate as a screening tool for heart disease in the IW

Significant progress is being made in diagnosing and treating canine heart problems, so that dogs are living longer, more active lives even with heart conditions. It is still preferable, of course, that dogs have healthy hearts. Continued research will help breeders evaluate the significance of various heart conditions and the effectiveness of tests to identify them, giving them more tools to make careful selection of healthy sires and dams and reduce the incidence of heart disease in future generations of IWs.

# Hip Dysplasia

(Continued from Page 2)

2 in 2008. I've long been a proponent of being open about health issues, as has Debbie Sharpe (who bred and co-owns Holly), so there was never any question of my NOT checking the "tell everyone" boxes on the various testing forms. Holly soon became the 22nd Irish Wolfhound in the CHIC (Canine Health Information Center) database: Connemara's Pagan Holiday, CGC.

Unfortunately for our breeding plans, Holly did not pass all of her health tests. Holly's hips were rated mildly dysplastic by OFA. I followed up with a PennHip evaluation just to be sure, and that confirmed that though her rear looked fine, it was hiding more laxity than is normal for an IW. No one would ever have guessed it watching her trot or run with no hint of discomfort. Or expected it looking at the 5 generations of hip results behind her which ranged from Fair to Excellent, with the majority (including both parents) being Good. Not every dog in her immediate background was tested but quite a few were, as well as siblings in various generations, so there was a pattern

of known acceptable hips. We had reasonably expected her hips to be acceptable, too.

Instead, we found that Good + Good can produce Mildly Dysplastic. What would Mildly Dysplastic + Good or better produce? We weren't willing to find out. Holly was not such a stunning example of the breed that we were willing to risk creating symptomatically dysplastic puppies. I'm not sure I would ever see that as a risk worth taking. Of course, it's possible we would have created carriers and no affecteds, but since there's no DNA test to identify carriers we would have been spreading those genes further with each subsequent generation. We don't know exactly how hip dysplasia is inherited or what factors determine its severity. There are studies in other breeds showing that removing affected dogs from the breeding program reduces the incidence of hip dysplasia as time goes on, and both OFA and PennHip recommend removing affected dogs from the breeding pool. We know affected dogs have exactly the wrong set of genes to pass on. So Holly got to keep her genes to herself. She is now 5.5 and still shows no signs of having any sort of joint disease. She probably never will, unless she lives to be very old.

In order to keep the incidence of affected

dogs low in Irish Wolfhounds, we need to know who our affected dogs are so we do not breed them and pass on those genes. As has been said many, many times before: if you don't test, you're only guessing. My experience with Holly confirms that. Every breeding has the potential to spread hip dysplasia if the parents aren't tested. On the plus side, since it's a structural defect, you only need to test once in a dog's lifetime to be sure s/he isn't affected. It's not like heart disease, which may not show up till the dog is older.

Testing doesn't guarantee healthy puppies. No one in their right mind would claim that it does. But testing for hip dysplasia, and then removing affected dogs from breeding programs, should reduce the number of surprises in each generation, which is the best we can do until someone develops DNA tests that will enable us to identify carriers as well as affecteds and make breeding decisions accordingly. For the good of the breed ... test, don't guess.

For more information on hip dysplasia and the tests currently available to diagnose it please visit the OFA (<http://www.offa.org>) and/or PennHip (<http://www.pennhip.org>) websites.

# IWF Research Committee Members

Mariellen Dentino, MD, Chairman  
Janice M. Bright, BSN, MS, DVM, DACVIM

Margret Casal, Dr. Med Vet, PhD, Diplomate EUCAR

Anne Janis, MS

Nathaniel B. Sutter, PhD

Alice Timmerman, DVM

William D. Tyrrell Jr., DVM, DACVIM

Kathy Wilson

Frances Abrams, PhD,

Administrative Coordinator -  
Frances.abrams@att.net

## Homage Cookie

3 eggs

1 cup natural peanut butter

1 ½ cup mashed ripe banana

3 tablespoons of honey

3 cups whole wheat flour

1 ½ cup ground old fashioned oatmeal

Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

Mix egg, peanut butter, banana and honey.  
Add oatmeal and flour until well blended.

Turn dough out onto a floured board and roll to ¼ inch thick. Cut into shapes with cookie cutter and bake approx. 30 minutes or until brown. Bake time varies depending upon size of cookie.

Cookies maybe decorated with home dehydrated banana slices and drizzled with melted yogurt and carob chips.

Finishing cookies in a food dehydrator will add crispness and increase the shelf life.

*Editors note: These Cookies were handed out to the hounds at the 2010 IWAGS show. The recipe was included. I know my guys loved them!*

# Elephant in the Room

## The Health Research Committee Wants Your Input

The IWF's Health Research Committee is interested in finding out what you think is the "Elephant in the Room," in other words, the biggest health problem in our breed that needs more study. Whether it be what you see as the most serious health concern we're facing, or something less-talked about but seeming to occur more often, or something we might be able to breed out with just a bit more to go on, we're interested in hearing your opinion. Anyone can participate; just email your personal Elephant to us at [swampsyde26@att.net](mailto:swampsyde26@att.net)

## IWF Studies

- Info for Researchers
- Irish Wolfhound DNA Bank
- IW Seizure Study
- Echocardiogram vs. EKG
- Lifetime Cardiac Study
- ECG vs Holter
- Pathology of Dilated Cardiomyopathy
- PCD/Rhinitis
- Pneumonia
- PRA
- Lymphoma
- VPC Arrhythmias in IWs
- Heart Hormones
- Digoxin Treatment for AFib

## The Goal of the Health Research Committee

To identify the types and prevalence of health problems affecting the Irish Wolfhound, and to initiate, support and provide funding for study and research projects which address them.

To produce, publish, and distribute to IW owners and veterinary health care providers educational materials relating to diseases, genetic anomalies, and injuries which occur in the Irish Wolfhound.

To further the understanding of Irish Wolfhound health issues, thereby improving the quality of life for Irish Wolfhounds and their owners.

## Reduced-cost Echocardiograms and EKGs

Once again the IWF will be sponsoring reduced-cost echocardiograms and EKGs at the 2011 IWADV Specialty held in Morgantown PA this coming October. Last years response was great with over fifty dogs participating. Further details will become available on both the IWADV and IWF web sites ([www.iwadv.org](http://www.iwadv.org), [www.iwfoundation.org](http://www.iwfoundation.org)) later this summer. The heart testing information will also be included in the IWADV Specialty premium list.



# Hounds of the Harvest

*In Loving Tribute to our veterans at IWAGS...reprinted in memory of "Agnes of God." A great and wonderful friend of Anne Flanagan, Carrickaneena Sise faded from this life quietly after a joyous celebration of her 11th birthday, surrounded by those who loved her best. - C.J. Purvis*

The morning sun illuminates  
A hound at rest at Shepherd Lake.  
Greyhoundly form lies in repose,  
On legs outstretched, she props her nose.  
Strong, arched neck lifts head to yawn,  
And so the veteran greets the dawn.

Eyes dark and dreamy, soft and sweet,  
Ears perk! She hears approaching feet.  
The veteran rises up from rest,  
To greet the soul that she loves best.  
Hand jingles collar, eyes ignite,  
When hound and handler reunite.

Hand caresses graying muzzle.  
Hound in her turn, gives hand a nuzzle.  
No better time for old souls dreaming,  
When we hear the bagpipe's keening.  
A tenor croons a soldier's song,  
Hound adds bold voice to sing-along.

Our hearts hold tight to hounds no longer,  
At times like these their loss tugs stronger.  
The call goes out for veteran entries,  
Time to meet the steward sentries,  
Slips silver chain or' velvet ear,  
The handler's hand wipes 'way a tear.

The breed you love has gathered here,  
Each represents those you've held dear.  
In ageless woods they congregate.  
This timeless place in Garden State,  
Where planted seeds on hallowed grounds,  
Harvest a field of veteran hounds.

That fruit strides out in syncopation,  
Sweetest cream of wolfhound nation!  
Veterans claim a champion's due,  
Hearts beating strong, their honor true!  
No less than those great hounds of lore,  
These hounds that grace this grassy floor!

The epitome of this great breed  
Trot at the ends of leather lead.  
Strike palm to palm! Raise voice in chorus!  
Pay homage to the hounds before us!  
The hounds respond with lengthened strides,  
A grand parade for judge's eyes.

Silly dear, still thinks she's a pup,  
As handler struggles to keep up.  
She looks back as if to say,  
"Now who's the veteran here today?"  
She stops and strikes a hunter's pose,  
Ears give a twitch before they rose.

Judge makes notes in standard fashion,  
The words speak well of his compassion.  
He makes his placements in the ring,  
But does it really mean a thing?  
Do ribbons, trophies, words in print,  
Mean more than crowns of peppermint?

An autumn breeze stirs 'round the leaves,  
Cause pups to tug on jacket sleeves.  
Veteran's eyes, they close in slumber,  
We count our blessings by the number.  
May God protect these hounds of old,  
As fading sun turns dusty gold.

# The Irish Wolfhound Foundation gratefully acknowledges contributions from the following supporters

Candida and Carmine Agliotta <i>IMO James Mascia</i>	Marie Douches <i>IMO Louisa</i>	Earl Harrison III <i>IMO Art King &amp; Ch Trampas Dr Watson</i>	Margaret Managan <i>IMO Robert (Bob) Denk</i>
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Antoinette Ambrosio <i>IMO James J Mascia Jr</i>	Estate of Karen Malone	John and Barbara Hilbish	Julio Mendoza <i>IMO James J Mascia Jr</i>
Bonny Bell <i>IMO Jonette Jones</i>	Fairfield Warde High School Cheer Team <i>IMO James Mascia</i>	Cathy Leanne Howard <i>IMO Ch Aragorn's Bainwen of Caithness</i>	Susan McGreevy
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**The Irish Wolfhound Foundation**  
www.iwfoundation.org

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Member name(s) and address:

Name(s):	
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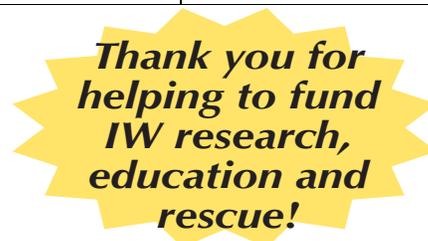
Payment information (US dollars only, please):

Dues donation:	\$20.00
Additional tax-deductible donation:	
Total enclosed:	

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Alternatively, you may remit payment using our online Gift Shop at  
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The Irish Wolfhound Foundation, Inc.

*Focus*

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THE Irish Wolfhound Foundation



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(Continued from Page 7)

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