

# NEWSLETTER

# IRISH WOLFHOUND

# HEALTH GROUP



## The Pneumonia Project — Understanding this condition.

Welcome to the IWHG newsletter.

2025 marked the launch of two major initiatives for the Health Group. Firstly, our **website was fully redesigned** and officially launched, and we hope you have found it clear, informative, and easy to navigate.

Secondly, a vital new step for our breed began with the launch of **the Pneumonia Project**, following an approach by Dr Mark Dunning of the University of Nottingham. This study builds on the work that Mark Dunning and Angela Bodey have undertaken over the past few years on pneumonia, including the ongoing collection of case studies which led to the rewriting of the Pneumonia Guide.

We believe this new project represents one of the most significant pieces of health research undertaken for Irish Wolfhounds in recent years.

As we know all too well, Irish Wolfhounds are particularly susceptible to pneumonia, yet we still do not fully understand why. In many cases, the disease develops following a kennel cough infection or as aspiration pneumonia, with no other obvious underlying cause. What makes this so concerning is how quickly pneumonia can progress — delays in diagnosis or treatment, even by a few hours, can sadly be fatal.

Despite this, pneumonia in Irish Wolfhounds is not widely recognised within the broader veterinary community as a breed issue. As a result, owners who suspect pneumonia in their hounds often find their concerns dismissed or underestimated, losing valuable time before effective treatment begins.

The Pneumonia Project aims to change that. Through a programme of swab testing and laboratory analysis, the research will investigate any underlying causes and bacterial profiles associated with pneumonia in the Irish Wolfhound.

The goal is to provide clear, evidence-based understanding that can inform both veterinary practice and owner awareness, ultimately improving diagnosis and saving lives. We are just as prepared to find that there are no common factors, but we need to start somewhere.

We are delighted to report that the first 50 swabs have now been sent to the laboratories. This initial batch includes a mix of hounds who have been affected by pneumonia and those who have not. Each sample has been divided, with one swab being tested in the UK and the other sent to a laboratory in the USA, ensuring a broad and comparative analysis.

We are now working to raise the funds needed to process the second batch of 50 swabs. While we have enough unaffected hounds already represented in the study, we are **actively seeking UK-based owners of dogs who have had pneumonia to contribute swabs**. These samples are crucial to the success of the project and to uncovering what makes our breed so vulnerable to this condition.

This research represents a vital collaboration between the Health Group, the breed community, Nottingham University, and the US all working with the shared goal of protecting the health and welfare of Irish Wolfhounds now and in the future. We are deeply grateful to everyone who has already supported this work — by funding, submitting swabs, or sharing information.

We will continue to keep you updated as the project progresses and as results begin to emerge during 2026.

### Contents

Heart Screening Report for 2025 .....	2
Treasurers Report .....	2
Clinical Significance of Cardiac Murmurs .....	3
Livershunt Testing Report for 2025 ...	4
BHC Update .....	4
Surveys – how you can help. ....	4
Available Guides .....	5



## Heart Screening Report for 2025

In 2025, the IWHG organised 19 Heart Screening sessions, with 249 hounds attending — slightly fewer than in 2024. Of those screened, 24 Super Veterans were funded by the IWHG, 27 Veterans were subsidised by the IWC, and 6 rescues were supported by the IWRT. We are also very grateful to the owners who generously made additional donations to the Heart Screening fund.

Overall, the programme made a loss of £3,827.71 and continues to fall short of covering its costs. As a result, the screening fee will increase to £130 per dog for 2026. The IWHG, IW Rescue Trust and IWC will continue to subsidise screenings for older and rescued hounds for a further year.

Six cardiologists supported the programme in 2025, with results contributed to Dr Serena Brownlie's wider study. We are extremely grateful for their commitment. However, we are sorry to report that Angela Bodey and Serena Brownlie will step down from January 2026, and Sheena Milne will continue in Milford only until April 2026. We are actively seeking additional cardiologists to fill these gaps.

We encourage continued support to ensure sessions remain viable, as they cannot run without enough. The scheme continues to offer excellent value, with equivalent independent testing costing up to £700.

2026 dates are being published on the IW Health Group website and sent by email (please check Spam/Junk folders). Updates will also be shared on Facebook.

Thank you for your continued support, and we wish you and your hounds good heart health in the year ahead.

---

### PLEASE NOTE

---

IWHG Emails have changed

Heart Screening Co-Ordinator :  
[heartscreening@iwhealthgroup.com](mailto:heartscreening@iwhealthgroup.com)

Heart Screening Booking:  
[heartscreenbooking@iwhealthgroup.com](mailto:heartscreenbooking@iwhealthgroup.com)

---

### DATES AND LOCATIONS

---

[Please visit the website to see upcoming dates and locations](#) for heart screening and whether they are open for bookings. You can book your place as soon as the session is open and invoicing takes place approximately two weeks before the session happens.

## Treasurers Report

The accounts for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 have now been audited and will be published on our website.

At the end of 2023 the balance sheet stood at £39,665 (2022: £40,746).

This comprised:

- the Project Development Fund with a balance of £11,589 (2022: £12,670)
- the Osteosarcoma Fund with a balance of £10,576 (2022: £10,576)
- the Pneumonia Fund with a balance of £2,000 (2022: £2,000)
- the Heart Testing Scanner Fund with a balance of £15,000 (2022: £15,000)
- the Administration Account with a balance of £500 (2022: £500)

During the year, £243 was reallocated from the Project Development Fund to the Administration Account to top the Administration Account to £500. A further £1,050 was allocated to the Heart Testing Account to cover the cost of Super Veterans heart testing.

Regional Heart Testing realized a loss of £7,138 in the year due to the increase in cardiologist costs not being passed on in an increase to the heart testing session fee, with remained at £75. A subsidy of £1,075 was provided from the Project Development Fund for Super Veterans heart testing, which continued to be free of charge.

The funding priorities identified for the Project Development Fund for 2024 were as follows:

- Allowance for Super Veteran heart testing subsidies - £1,000 to be set aside.

We would like to thank our fundraisers, donators and supporters for helping to generate donations of £8,328 in 2022. Direct donations amounted to £5,659, including a £5,000 donation from the Kennel Club Charitable Trust, with a further £2,573 generated by Easy Fundraising donations.

We would also like to express our continued gratitude to all those who donate, either by monthly standing order, direct donations, Easy Fundraising or supporting the fundraisers who do a fantastic job for the Group.

The accounts for 2024 and 2025 are in the process of being prepared and audited and will be published in due course.



# Clinical Significance of Cardiac Murmurs in Irish Wolfhounds

Dr. Serena E. Brownlie PhD BVM&S MRCVS Cert. SAC

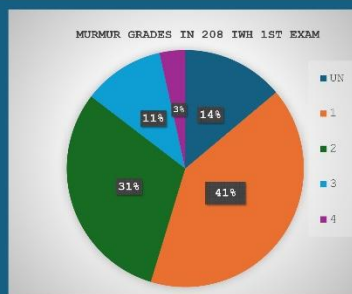
## BACKGROUND

Heart disease, resulting in congestive heart failure (CHF), is common in giant breed dogs, particularly Irish Wolfhounds. Previously described as Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM), not all affected dogs fit the criteria described for humans. Therefore, the term Irish Wolfhound type Cardiomyopathy (IWCM) is now preferred. (Tyrrell et al 2020)  
The United Kingdom Irish Wolfhound Heart Disease Project began in 1986 and continues to the present day, organising regional heart screening sessions for breeders throughout the UK and Ireland, each animal being examined yearly by auscultation, echocardiography and electrocardiography (ECG). By December 2023, data was available for 2788 dogs (first examination), 1191 males (M) and 1597 females (F). The number of dogs re-examined (2-7 times) was 1369 (49%).

## MANIFESTATIONS OF IWCM - AIMS

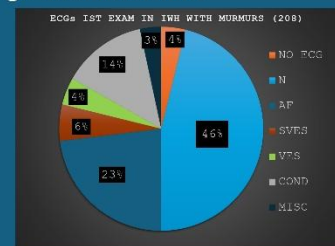
Arrhythmias are frequently identified (Brownlie,1991), the most common being atrial fibrillation (AF) (473 dogs, 10m – 10yrs, 17%). Other supraventricular and ventricular arrhythmias and conduction abnormalities are also seen on ECG. Atrial and left ventricular enlargement (LVE) on echocardiography have also been described, often in the absence of arrhythmias.  
However cardiac murmurs are sometimes detected and have not been documented in detail. Many breeders believe that they are of no significance ("hound murmurs"). The data was reviewed to determine the prevalence of murmurs detected by auscultation, the murmur grade and, if possible, to assess the origin and clinical significance of murmurs in Irish wolfhounds by reviewing the re-examination results for disease progression.

Murmur grades:  
Total 208 / 2788  
Unspecified – 29  
1/6 - 85  
2/6 - 64  
3/6 - 23  
4-5/6 - 7

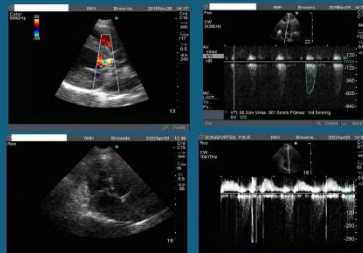


## ECG findings in 208 dogs with murmurs:

Normal - 96  
AF – 48  
SV – 12  
VE – 9  
Conduction – 28  
Misc - 7  
No ECG -8



**Congenital defects**  
Aortic stenosis (2)  
Pulmonic Stenosis (2)  
Tricuspid Dysplasia (1)



**Mitral valve Disease (MVD) / Dysplasia (MD)**  
45 dogs



## RESULTS

Out of 2788 dogs, 208 (7.5%) had murmurs recorded at their 1<sup>st</sup> examination, 70 M, 138 F, age range 6 months to 10 years.

All but one murmurs recorded were systolic but aortic regurgitation was identified in 36/208 dogs by colour flow Doppler.

Grade 1/6 murmurs were the most common (85/208).

Grade 2/6 were detected in 64/208, grade 3/6 in 23/208.

In 7 dogs, grade 4 or 5/6 were detected.

AF was present in 48/208 at 1<sup>st</sup> examination and murmurs were mostly associated with mitral regurgitation. DCM /CHF/pleural effusion were present in 33/208, LVE in 38. Mitral valve disease or dysplasia was evident in 45 dogs.

Aortic stenosis was diagnosed in 2 young dogs, pulmonic stenosis in 2, tricuspid dysplasia in 1 and there was 1 case of endocarditis.

At 2<sup>nd</sup> examination (104 dogs), 45 dogs still had murmurs. In 41 no murmur was recorded but 6 had developed new AF. Murmur grade increased in 8.

At 3<sup>rd</sup> examination (66 dogs) 17 dogs still had murmurs, 12 had AF, including 7 new cases, but 15 had no murmur.

At 4<sup>th</sup> examination (42 dogs) 11 still had murmurs, 11 had AF including 4 new cases, but 15 had no murmur and were still normal on ECG and echo.

At 5<sup>th</sup> examination (30 dogs) 13 had AF, including 5 new cases. Nine were still normal on auscultation, ECG and echo.

At 6<sup>th</sup> examination 12 dogs survived, 3 with AF but no new cases. Five dogs were still normal on auscultation, ECG and echo. The oldest dog of this cohort to remain normal was 102 months old.

## CONCLUSIONS

1 Murmurs are not commonly recorded in Irish wolfhounds -7.5% (This may be partly associated with operator factors or conditions.)

2 Half (50%) of 208 dogs with murmurs at first examination had an ECG abnormality, compared with 26% without murmurs. AF, characteristic of IWCM (Brownlie and Cobb 1999) was present in 48 / 208 (23%) of dogs with murmurs initially, and developed in a further 22 (70/208) (33.7%)

3 In dogs examined on multiple occasions, 5 dogs survived into old age with no auscultation, ECG or echo abnormalities. All had grade 1/6 murmurs recorded on one occasion, probably physiological.

4 Congenital heart disease does occur in wolfhounds. Mitral valve abnormalities are easily seen using echocardiography. However, differentiation between acquired MVD and MD is difficult – cases interpreted as MD were young dogs and tended to have stubby abnormal valve cusps (< 3 years). Cases interpreted as MVD tended to be older, often > 7 years, resembling MVD in smaller breeds.

5 Murmurs in Irish wolfhounds should not be dismissed as physiological without follow up examinations or investigations.

## References

- Brownlie SE. (1991) An electrocardiographic survey of cardiac rhythm in Irish wolfhounds Vet Rec. Nov 23;129(21):470-1.
- Brownlie SE, Cobb MA. (1999) Observations on the development of congestive heart failure in Irish wolfhounds with dilated cardiomyopathy. J Small Anim Pract, Aug;40(8):371-7.
- Tyrrell WD, Abbott JA, Rosenthal SL, Dentino M, Abrams F Echocardiographic and electrocardiographic evaluation of North American Irish Wolfhounds (2020)
- Wright Intern Med. Mar; 24(2):E81-E89

## Livershunt Testing Report for 2025

Irish Wolfhound breeders test for liver shunt to ensure that puppies going to new homes are healthy. A shunt can cause serious illness and usually requires major surgery, something no new owner wants to face. Testing helps prevent heartbreak and ensures responsible breeding. Through our arrangement with Cytopath Laboratories, breeders can access discounted tests: £18.00 for a single bile acid test and £30.50 for a double bile acid test.

Cytopath kindly provides us with statistics each year for numbers of puppies tested / affected.

For 2025

Litter	Number of pups in litter	Results - normal	Results - abnormal
1	11	11	0
2	2	2	0
3	3	3	0
4	8	8	0
5	7	7	0
6	10	9	1*
7	6	6	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>1</b>

\* Puppy retested on a double Bile Acid Test and was normal

**Forms for testing can be downloaded from the Health Group website.**

### BHC Update

Dr. Maura Lyons – Breed Health Co-Ordinator

### **KC Health Schemes: Helpful in Theory, But Limited for Irish Wolfhounds**

The Kennel Club has put together a couple of new schemes for dog health called the Health Standard and the Breeding For Health Framework. With the Health Standard the idea is to standardise health testing across breeds and make it easier for breeders and buyers to know which checks are recommended, so tests are split into 2 categories: Good Practice and Best Practice.

In practice, though, the system is not very useful for Irish Wolfhounds:

Only tests that apply to lots of breeds, or are officially approved by the Kennel Club, make it onto the list. For Wolfhounds, that means the eye test is the only one included.

The most important tests — like heart checks for parent dogs or liver shunt screening for puppies — are recommended by breed clubs and the Irish Wolfhound

Health Group but aren't clearly mentioned or easy to find on the Kennel Club site.

This can lead to confusing messages: some commercial litters advertised on the KC website recently were labelled that the sire “meets Best Practice health screening” just because he had an eye test - this is clearly confusing for unsuspecting puppy buyers. The Kennel Club has other initiatives, like the Breeding for Health framework, but Wolfhounds are not currently prioritised as we did not qualify for inclusion on their small population size breeds workshops for genetic diversity support, and we don't yet fall under the new “Nose-to-Tail” visual assessment system, which is currently being developed.

Bottom line: The KC's schemes are a step in the right direction, but for Irish Wolfhounds, much of the guidance is hidden or limited. Serious health screening still relies on breed-specific recommendations, not just the general KC list. So Breeders and Buyers alike - please check with the IWHG for the correct guidance.

### Surveys – how you can help.

We realise at times everyone can suffer survey fatigue – however, collecting information is so important. The Health Group have several surveys running to collect information on various conditions to ascertain its prevalence and contribute to future research.

The key survey is Pneumonia if you have had a dog with pneumonia, whatever country you are in, please do a survey for us.

PNEUMONIA	<a href="#">PNEUMONIA SURVEY</a>
For pneumonia, we need data on which antibiotics were used and for how long, given vets' reluctance to prescribe long-term treatment.	<a href="#">ANTBIOTIC SURVEY</a>
DENTITION STUDY	<a href="#">DENTITION SURVEY FOR OWNERS</a> <a href="#">DENTITION SURVEY FOR BREEDERS</a>
FIBROCARTILAGINOUS EMBOLISM (PUPPY PARALYSIS)	<a href="#">FCE SURVEY</a>
LYMPHOSARCOMA	<a href="#">LYMPHOMA SURVEY</a>
UK VETERAN STUDY	<a href="#">UK VETERAN QUESTIONNAIRE</a>



## Available Guides

- GUIDE TO ANAESTHETIC USE IN IRISH WOLFHOUSES
- GUIDE TO BLOAT
- DENTITION GUIDE
- GUIDE TO FCE
- GUIDE TO HEART DISEASE
- GUIDE TO MEGAESOPHAGUS
- [PNEUMONIA GUIDE FOR OWNERS](#)
- [PNEUMONIA GUIDE FOR VETS](#)
- GUIDE TO PRA

[All Guides and Surveys can be found Here - please do have a look](#)

