



Winter 2018

Patron : Trudie Sumner

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Welcome

To the winter edition of the IWHG newsletter, we hope you have had a great Christmas and we wish both you and your hounds a Very Happy, Peaceful and Healthy New Year!

The last quarter has been busy for the Health Group and also for all those owners who participated in the Breed Health Survey and the ongoing Pneumonia Study for which many thanks.

As discussed over the last year or so, Irish Wolfhounds are in the second phase of breeds required by the Kennel Club to develop a [Breed Health and Conservation Plan \(BHCP\)](#). This is a new initiative from the KC that all breeds will eventually have to comply with. It's a collaborative process between the breeds and the KC and the IWHG and representatives of all the breed clubs met with the KC's Health Department in early October to discuss their first draft and develop an Action Plan. The second draft is currently under review and we will be reporting back on that later in the year.

A key part of developing the BHCP is using evidence based criteria, so we wanted to have an up to date snapshot of the Breed's Health Status as a starting point. The KC's own pedigree breed surveys were conducted in 2004 and 2014 and apart from being out of date, had not generated very high number of responses. September's call for all UK owners to complete the IWHG Breed Health Survey resulted in an excellent uptake, generating 363 responses and we are very grateful to everyone who took part. A report on the initial findings is in this edition and we will be reporting back on this in more detail later in the year.

One of the interesting results from the Breed Survey is that the most common conditions that affect our hounds are the same as for all other breeds, namely ear infections, chronic tummy upsets/diarrhoea and skin allergies. This edition has a timely

article from Pauline Jewett on her personal experience of Itchy Skin in her own hound and how she has managed to deal with it.

Also in this edition are details of the new arrangement that has been set up for breeders with a new Laboratory for livershunt test results, Cytopath. We are grateful to IDDEX, which has had a long-standing association with the breed, but they are now no longer able to continue their earlier preferential rates. So we are delighted that Cytopath are happy to join forces with the breed.

New for 2019 - Nottingham Veterinary School has asked the breed to become involved in a new study on Bloat (Gastric Dilatation Volvulus/GDV), which is already underway with Deerhounds and Greyhounds – it is breed specific, but also will also be reviewed against these other breed studies.

This is still considered a very serious condition in IWHs so is well worth participating in – we know you are asked to fill in a lot of surveys, but we hope that some of this will bear fruit and help all IWHs in the future.

We hope you enjoy this edition and if you have anything you would like to see covered in future editions, do let us know.

- [New Lab for Livershunt Testing](#)
- [Treasurer's Report](#)
- [The Problem of Itchy Skin](#)
- [Pneumonia – A Call for Case Studies](#)
- [New Bloat Study](#)
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- [Dates for your Diary](#)
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IWHG

As 2018 draws to an end, I look back on the last twelve months and the fantastic efforts of our amazing fundraisers.

The Irish Wolfhound Community spring raffle drawn at Crufts in March raised the magnificent sum of £1,490, adding to the £733 already received from Mandy Addington in January from the sale of Irish Wolfhound Community merchandise, 2018 calendars and greetings cards. More recently, Mandy donated a further £1,100 from the sale of her greetings cards and 2019 calendars, a tremendous effort that raised a similar figure for the other Irish Wolfhound causes, the IW Rescue Trust and PAWS.

[Irish Wolfhound Community Page](#)

Thank you to Helen Ward for the fantastic donation earlier in the year of £600 from the sale of her beautiful Posh Collars – if you haven't bought one of these for your dog, then you should!

[Posh Collars](#)

During the year we also received a very generous donation of £596 from DeWolf Dog Training, so thank you to everyone at DeWolf who contributed towards this.

[DeWolf Dog Training](#)

Several hundred pounds was donated in loose change tins (final figure to be confirmed once the last couple of tins are counted), so a huge thank you to everyone who donates in this way. And a thank you also to Jill Stayte for topping up our supply of loose change tins this year.

Easyfundraising, where participating online retailers give donations when you make purchases on their websites, raised the fantastic sum of £956 in 2018. The link to sign up for Easyfundraising, if you haven't done so already, is

[Easyfundraising](#)

Thank you to everyone who donates by regular monthly standing order, this regular income is invaluable to the Group and is much appreciated.

In addition to thanking those who support the IWHG financially, we'd like to say a huge thank you to all of you who support group in kind through contribution of your resources, time and talents.

Preparation of the year end accounts is under way and these will be published as soon as they are complete and audited.

Steven Ritchie – Treasurer

treasurer@iwhealthgroup.co.uk

New Lab for Livershunt Testing Scheme

We are delighted to say we have partnered with a new lab for the Breed Livershunt Testing Scheme and would like to introduce Cytopath.

For over two decades firstly Vetlab and then Idexx have supported our breed on Livershunt Testing by offering reduced prices for bile acid testing. As we know, nothing lasts for ever and changes in structure at Idexx meant they could no longer offer the discounts we have benefited from for so long and had to increase their prices. We would like to express our immense gratitude for this fantastic support over so many years. Idexx are of course still offering bile acid testing but at the new pricing.

So a new era begins, and we have the support of CYTOPATH, a lab located in Ledbury, Herefordshire, who are happy to come on board with agreed fixed testing rates for bile acid tests at a level we have enjoyed in previous years.

The procedure remains the same as indicated on the previous testing forms, with one main exception:

Breeders will need to order a pre-addressed envelope from CYTOPATH well in advance of the test being done.

All the information needed is on the testing forms which are [available for download here](#).

We are delighted and grateful that Cytopath have agreed to support the scheme and look forward to many years working with them.



As all Irish Wolfhound owners know – or should be aware of – Bloat or GDV in our breed is considered a very serious and emergency condition – it is life threatening and needs urgent veterinary attention.

In the breed's Annual Health Report to the KC it has always featured as a major concern for the breed and it has ranked third in the top three conditions considered most important to the breed, (the other two being Osteosarcoma/bone cancer and Heart Disease). So as a breed it could be very beneficial to contribute to any research into the condition – even if that means completing another survey.

This study is seeking to identify factors that can influence the onset and outcomes of bloat and is looking for as much information that might inform how best to develop management strategies to reduce the incidence in the breed.

As with all studies, we need as many surveys completed as possible for the data to have significance. The Researcher is interested in all affected dogs as well as those in the same household that were unaffected so that comparisons can be

drawn. Generally, dogs that have not had bloat are also of interest for comparative purposes, so the study is open to all.

[CLICK HERE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY](#)

Interestingly, the study distinguishes between GD, just Gastric Dilatation, and GDV Gastric Dilatation Volvulus, when the stomach actually turns. It is not a distinction the breed usually makes as any distention in the stomach is a cause for concern and for the owner to be on the alert. However, some owners may well have experienced a dog being 'gassy' or having a 'squeaky tummy', and administered antacids without it actually becoming a full-blown bloat or cause for emergency treatment. This presumably would come under that GD category.

However, we would like to remind everyone to read our guide on recognising bloat and what action to take as this condition can be fatal very quickly if not recognised or left too long

[The guide can be found here](#)

Dates for your Diary in 2019

23rd February 2019

Irish Wolfhound & Deerhound Breed Health Open Day at Nottingham Veterinary School – this is open to all owners and is free of charge. It will be held at the NVS Sutton Bonnington site, full details of which room and how to book will be announced shortly – please keep a look out for this on our website and on Facebook.

2nd or 3rd Saturday in November

IWHG Breed Health Seminar – Please keep the date – full details of venue and programme to be announced very soon.

The IWHG Table will be present at most Breed Shows and Events throughout the year and we look forward to seeing you all there.

2018 was an exciting year for the regional Heart Testing Scheme with additional cardiologist Dave Fisher and returning cardiologist Sue Roberts, it was lovely to welcome them both on board. There was a change to the administration team for the Heart Testing Scheme. We welcomed Anne Vaudin, who was able to take over heart testing bookings and implement an online booking form, which has proven very popular and effective.

Sadly, with adverse weather conditions at the start of the spring, a couple of sessions were affected with low attendance as some were unable to travel due to road conditions. Despite this the sessions could run and those more local to the venues were able to attend.

Attendees who were unable to travel were accommodated in sessions later in the year; however, it did mean that some sessions met the maximum number of attendees quickly and were fully booked. Luckily, we have a set of lovely cardiologists and in some cases, we were able to add additional attendees to the sessions, which I cannot thank the cardiologists enough for.

The Heart Testing Scheme ran 22 sessions through the UK (including 1 in Northern Ireland) and 1 session in Ireland, making a total of 23 sessions.

We have enjoyed the benefit of heart testing at a reduced cost for many years, and continue to do so, but from 2019 the cost per hound will rise to £50.00 per dog for the full three-part test. This remains exceptional value and super veterans 8 years and over and rescue hounds will continue to be subsidised.

The sessions were split between our 5 cardiologists as follows:

Cardiologist	Number of Sessions	Attendees
Angela Bodey	14	206
Serena Brownlie-Sykes	4	45
Dave Fisher	1	12
Sheena Milne	3	28
Sue Roberts	1	13
Total		304

Of these attendees 25 were Super Veterans, aged 8 years and over which is an increase in those numbers tested in 2017 which stood at 17 Super Veterans tested throughout the year. The number of total hounds tested has also increased in 2018 compared to 2017, showing that the Heart Testing Scheme is continuing to grow and the demand is becoming steadily greater. Thank you to all for your support of this scheme, which I believe is paramount for the future heart health of our beloved hounds.

Planning for 2019 is underway and we look forward to seeing new and returning attendees at the sessions. Dates and venues will be published direct onto the Health Group website when they become available. Thank you for all your continued support and please do not hesitate to email me direct with any feedback you may have.

Wendy Heather - Heart Testing Coordinator

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Pneumonia - A Call for Case Studies

We would like to thank everyone who responded to our recent call for surveys to be completed and sent in before the end of the year. We set this deadline so that Dr Angela Bodey MRCVS, who will be doing some further work on this study in January, has additional data to work with.

We know that pneumonia continues to be a very serious problem within the breed and we are hoping that this study will help to educate both vets and owners to recognise, treat and manage the condition.

However, the study can only be as good as the data that it receives, so the more surveys that are submitted, the better the research will be.

So, the call for more surveys is ongoing and we **continue to ask owners who have had a hound go down with pneumonia – and who has not completed a survey – to please do so.**

Pneumonia is not always easy to diagnose and can be the result of several different causes, so if your hound has had acute respiratory disease, but not been diagnosed with pneumonia as such, it is still worthwhile completing a survey.

This is a worldwide study, not just limited to the UK – so please wherever you are, do complete a survey. The treatment history from your vet is also very important if it can be obtained, and it is possible to attach files to the online survey.

Please help us to help you. Thank you.

[Please complete the online survey here](#)

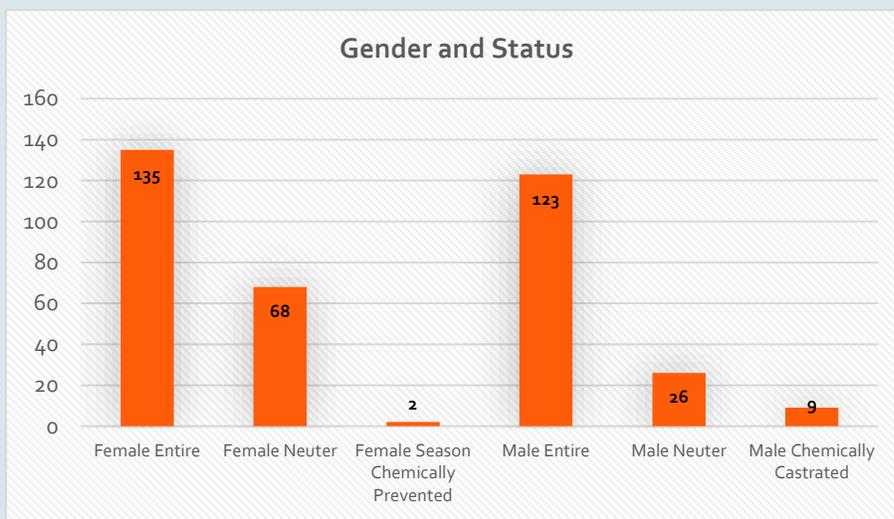
[Download the Pneumonia Guides to give to your Veterinary Surgeon Here](#)

[Owners Guide – Recognising Pneumonia.](#)

The IWHG circulated two breed health surveys during September of 2018. The Breed Health Survey was for all owners of Irish Wolfhounds to complete giving information about the Irish Wolfhounds they have owned that were either alive now or had died in the last 10 years. The second survey was only applicable to people who had bred a litter in the last 10 years. The surveys were available to complete from August 27th until September 21st. We received 363 completed Breed Health surveys, which also included mortality information on 286 dogs – these dogs had died in the preceding 10 years. The Breeders Health survey had 35 completed responses giving details on 91 bitches used in a total of 159 matings. What follows is a summary of the information received – we hope you find it interesting.

The Breed Health Survey Responses

Of the live dogs that information was submitted about 57% were female and 43% were male.



The age range of live dogs was 4 months to 12 years 2 months. We asked questions based on which body part or system was affected by disease conditions or disorders. There were 15 categories in which owners could record conditions affecting their dogs. It was acknowledged that often an illness may fall into two different categories, but we asked owners not to worry too much where the disease was recorded – but that it was simply important to record it. This information was then manually sorted for simplification of categorisation. The categories are recorded below in order of most commonly reported diseases. Remember that some hounds may suffer from more than one illness.

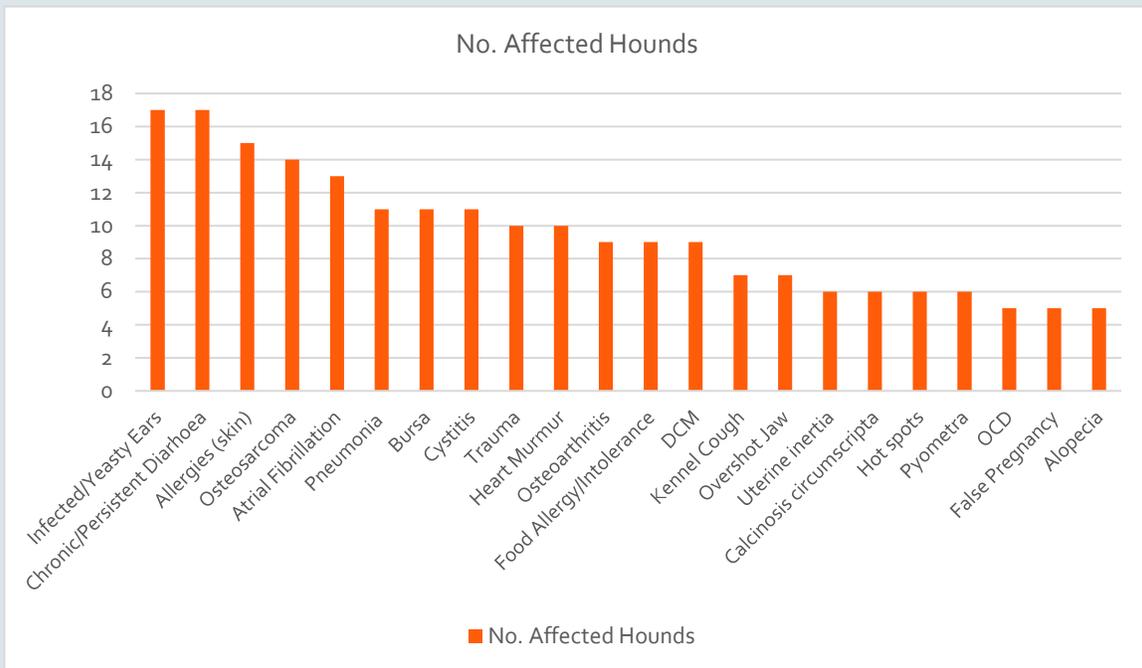
Body System Disease Category	Number of Recorded Hounds	Males/Females
No Diseases Reported	154	62/92
Bones, Muscles, Joints	73	36/37
Skin, Coat, Ear	56	28/28
Digestive System	51	27/24
Cardiovascular System	42	24/18
Reproductive System	30	6/24
Respiratory Conditions	27	12/15
Dentition	24	10/14
Urinary Tract System	23	10/13
Nervous System	12	6/6
Other Cancers	8	2/6
Eye Problems	8	5/3
Other Conditions	7	6/1
Liver Problems	3	2/1
Hormone/Endocrine System	2	2/0
Blood Conditions	1	0/1

Disease Prevalence in Living Hounds

These are owner reported instances of conditions affecting their wolfhounds. The most commonly recorded conditions are listed in the bar chart below.

The most commonly reported conditions are ones that seem to be reported as being the commonest across all dogs – whether pure bred or not – chronic ear infections, persistent, recurring diarrhoea and allergies affecting skin. These can be immensely irritating and frustrating for the dog and the owner, but not usually life threatening. Next in frequency is osteosarcoma (3.8%), perhaps unfortunately unsurprising, then atrial fibrillation (3.6%), pneumonia and bursas (3% each), these would be more familiar to wolfhound owners. Only 2.4% of live wolfhounds reported being affected with DCM.

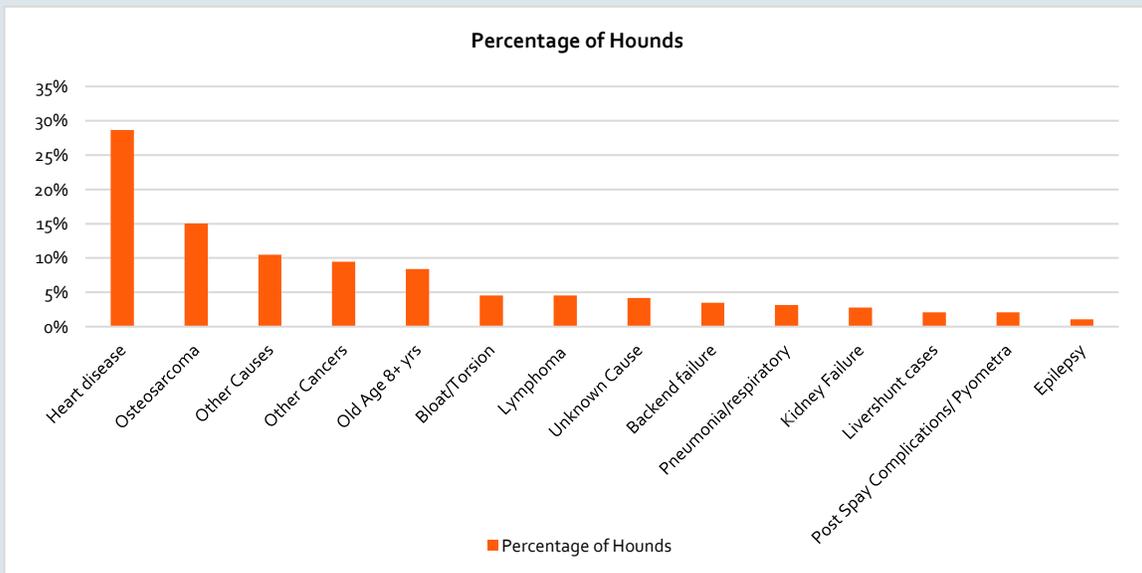
There were many more conditions reported at a frequency of 4 hounds (1.1%) or less – entropion, livershunt, misplaced lower canines, undershot jaw, Wobblers, Addisons, various cancers, and other assorted conditions reported at one affected hound each.



Mortality Data of Wolfhounds

One question asked for cause of death data for any hounds that had passed away in the last 10 years.

Reported data has been trimmed and causes of death have been categorised to the best of our ability. Responses were received for 286 wolfhounds.



Heart disease and osteosarcoma are the most commonly reported causes of death among wolfhounds.

IWHG Breeders Survey Responses

We asked breeders to tell us about the litters and attempted matings they had over the last 10 years. We received responses from 35 breeders

Question Asked	Total	% of Whole
How many bitches have had litters	91	
How many litters have they had	109	
Natural birth	78	71.56%
Emergency Caesarean Section	30	27.52%
Elective Caesarean Section	1	0.92%
Total number of puppies born	822	
Number of pups born alive	774	94.16%
Number of puppies that died in the first week	12	1.46%
Number of pups that had a birth defect	37	4.5%
Number of matings that did not result in a litter -	50	31%

Worryingly, over a quarter of all births need to be via emergency caesarean section, causes for this need to be investigated. Also, nearly a third of the total number of matings did not result in a litter – we need to find out if this is comparable across all dog breeds, and whether there is anything that can be done to improve this situation.

Birth defects were categorised as follows

Category	Surgery/Survived	PTS/Died
Livershunt	4	3
Monorchid	4	
Defective heart valve	2	
Entropion	1	
Bilateral Subluxating patellas	1	
FCE	1	
Cryptorchid	5	
Overshot	2	
Hernia	1	
Heart murmur	1	
Incomplete midline closure		4
Encephalitis		1
Dysplasia	4	
Kidney problem	1	
Carpal hyperflexion	1	

Livershunt is has the highest incidence alongside monorchidism and cryptorchidism – again these results need to be investigated in more detail before commenting.

Further analyses of the survey results will appear in future newsletters, and we hope to repeat the exercise on a regular basis.

We thank all the owners who took the time to respond, your help is truly appreciated by the whole breed.

Maura Lyons - Health Research Co-ordinator

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Phoenix came to me when she was 7 months old. She had red rimmed eyes, and they got gradually worse. She would cry while she scratched and would scratch until she bled. Inside her ears and round her eyes felt burning hot to touch. She couldn't settle and it was heart-breaking to watch. I took her to the vet who suggested an exclusion diet.



She was on a good quality kibble at that time. Over the following six or seven months, we tried so many different options. Prednisone made her need to go to the toilet every ten minutes, even throughout the night. Antihistamines alone didn't help.

Foods didn't seem to make any difference. Time of year didn't seem to make any difference and she gradually got worse. So, we got a referral to the veterinary dermatologist in Glasgow, who sedated her, shaved one side of her body and did around 50 pin pricks onto her side containing the most common allergens.

She had a dramatic response to six things. Two types of house dust mites, two types of insect and two types of storage/biscuit mites. Fantastic! Now we knew what her allergies were, we could start working out how to address them!

For house dust mites, steam cleaning, removing carpets, and using anti mite sprays helped. For biscuit mites, all food had to be frozen beforehand. Every biscuit, kibble or treat.

The veterinary dermatologist also prescribed Apoquel. 24mg a day for her 70kg weight. Now, at that time, I'd a friend with her dog on Apoquel, so I knew a bit about the drug and it was extremely concerning. It suppresses the immune system, making the dog far more vulnerable to cancers, pneumonia and basically anything going. It hadn't been tested long term. I had a long talk with the dermatologist and my own vet and made the decision that her quality of life was so poor, that it was better she had a shorter, happier life than a long miserable one. That may sound simplistic but that's what it came down to.

So, within days of being on Apoquel, she became much better. The redness went, the itching stopped and she seemed happier in herself. But as time went on, Phoenix's behaviour deteriorated. She was always challenging but she became very reactive with other dogs.

I have her sister, Tala, who is quite a shy girl, but Phoenix is nervy about anything or anyone different. I took her to agility to try to encourage her self-esteem, but even there, it became obvious that changes made her upset.

On one occasion some children came along, and she wouldn't turn her back to them to do the agility work. On another occasion, a tractor was in a nearby field and she would not take her eyes off it.

I saw three different behaviourists about her. The third one understood her and his suggestions were very helpful. A group of IWH owners who understood helped tremendously and were my 'go to' on the difficult days.

I spent a lot of time working with her to give her space from what worried her, asking other people to keep their dogs away, getting her to sit and focus on me when something worried her, treating her when she succeeded, as she increasingly did.

She often redirected her frustration at my other two hounds, and the only way to keep them safe, when outdoors, or in the car, was to muzzle her.

I have heard from several sources that Apoquel can have behavioural effects, but couldn't find anything in writing anywhere that verified this. But I worried that the Apoquel was either causing or exacerbating her behaviour, and as time went on, I worried more and more that she may get cancer. So, I began researching more natural alternatives. I reached out to anyone and everyone I knew who could help. I changed their diets to raw meat, bones and offal.

And I began to wean her off the Apoquel and onto these more natural alternatives.

The alternatives I used, and still use daily are as follows;

- Quercetin and bromelain 1000mg
- Bee propolis 1000mg
- Apis mel 200c
- Bovine colostrum 1000mg
- Camu camu powder (vitamin c source) quarter teaspoon
- Bee pollen quarter teaspoon
- Atarax antihistamine 20mg
- Occasional kefir, bio live yoghurt and vsl#3 probiotics

I got her down to 8mg of Apoquel a day but if I tried even a day of not giving her the Apoquel, she would become itchy again. The Apoquel seemed to cause dependency.

So, she needed some sort of boost to break that dependency.

I researched ciclosporin. It was a single dose injection for Phoenix which is supposed to last four to eight weeks but some people with dogs with seasonal allergies found they only had to give it once or twice a year. Again, there were the worries about lack of long term testing. Again, I'd to put some faith in the vets. But it seemed possible that ciclosporin could break that cycle.

So, we tried a single dose.

It immediately replaced the Apoquel and it was a joy to not have to give her that any more. After a month, she still seemed fine. After two months she occasionally itched, but I'd give her a good face scratch, and bring forward that day's dosage of natural remedies. Within half an hour of getting them, the itch would disappear. If I forgot the natural remedies, it would become obvious with reddening eyes, face rubbing and itching.

We are now around six months down the line and I can happily say Phoenix's itching is controlled. Her behaviour has mostly calmed down, with the occasional hiccup. Overall, she is a calmer, happier dog. She warms to strangers quicker. And I feel I am doing my best for her, both medically and behaviourally.

It seems the process of addressing and controlling the itch requires a boost to the immune system, which is largely regulated in the gut, so improving gut biota, using probiotics, helps, as does largely avoiding antibiotics (but if necessary, quickly following them up with a variety of good probiotics),

and avoiding parasites. I use crushed eggshells, fur-on rabbit's ears and ground raw pumpkin seeds to deter worms.

It is also clear that Phoenix is allergic to other things; things which she wasn't tested for. So, I can only be sure that she is allergic to the 6 out of 50 things she was tested for, but there are millions of potential allergens possible, and it's impossible to control her environment 100% so controlling her reaction to it by strengthening her immune system makes more sense than dampening down her immune system against everything.

If this article can help one other 'itchy dog' like Phoenix, I'm pleased. Good Luck!

Pauline Jewett MInstF(cert) MIEEM AIEMA MAPM FCMI

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[Heart Testing Sessions Current Dates and Locations Available here](#)

[Heart Test Booking Form to book a session – click here](#)

[Guide to Buying an Irish Wolfhound Puppy](#)

[Down load the **FREE** Breed Guide](#)

[Livershunt Testing Forms](#)

[Guide to Neutering Your Hound](#)

[Find All Our Other Breed Health Guidelines Here](#)

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