

# DENTAL OCCLUSIONS\* IN IRISH WOLFHOUND PUPPIES

from 8 – 23 weeks

What is 'normal'?

Which of these 8/9 week old puppies have 'normal' mouths for an Irish Wolfhound puppy?

*\*occlusion is the way the teeth and jaws meet*



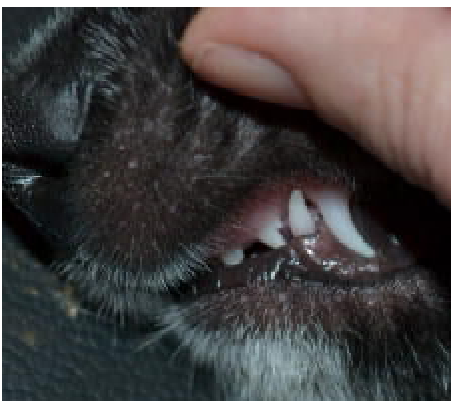
The answer is all of them!  
All of these puppies grew up to have correct mouths for the breed i.e. a scissor bite with the top incisors just overlapping the bottom and the lower canines fitting neatly into the space between the upper canines and the lateral (outermost) incisors.



Perhaps the better question to ask is  
**"Should I be concerned?"**  
and

**"Is early surgical intervention (i.e. at 10 weeks or so) necessary and appropriate in giant breed puppies with misplaced lower canines, or is conservative management an acceptable alternative?"**

Misplaced lower canines are often seen in young Irish Wolfhound puppies in both the **deciduous** and the **permanent** teeth



perfect occlusion  
lower canine in correct position



'needs monitoring' (view A)  
tip of lower canine impinging gum



'needs monitoring' (view B) indentation  
in upper gum, no soreness seen as yet, but a careful watch needed for signs of irritation

Incorrectly aligned lower canines can be due to any (or a combination) of the following:-

- a temporary disparity in jaw growth
- canines in too upright a position
- narrow lower jaw

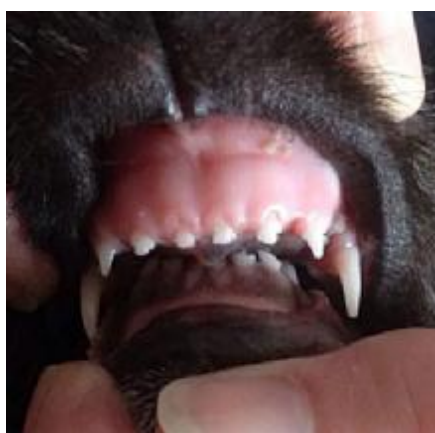
**any or all of the above situations have the potential to change as the puppy grows**

The only possible benefit from an operation to remove misplaced lower 'baby' canine teeth is to provide short term pain relief, since the offending teeth will be shed in a matter of weeks anyway. Oral surgery itself is painful and requires general anaesthesia, drugs for post-op pain relief and a course of antibiotics. This operation will not change the way the permanent teeth erupt, nor alter the jaw lengths and widths and their relationship to each other. Those aspects are controlled by genetics. Based on the information gathered by the study, the IWHG recommends adopting a "wait and see" policy, with pain relief if necessary. A few puppies, may need intervention to alleviate discomfort from malocclusions of the **permanent teeth**, but this cannot be predicted at this stage.

**A POSSIBLE EXCEPTION - The photos below, show a puppy who does NOT have a 'normal' occlusion**

An abnormality occasionally seen in young Irish Wolfhound puppies is the overshot jaw, when the upper jaw (maxilla) is considerably longer than the lower (mandible). IW puppies with a significantly overshot jaw, often have a very narrow as well as short, lower jaw.

Relative jaw length can differ by 1" (2.5cms) or more and this condition is usually evident by 8 weeks. The following photographs show the development of a puppy with an overshot jaw from 10 weeks to 14 months. Looking at the space between each tooth in the upper jaw, you can see how much both jaws lengthened during this time, with the lower jaw continuing to grow after the upper had stopped.



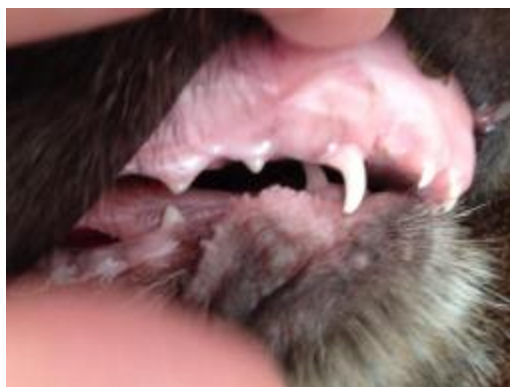
This jaw formation is genetic in origin and occurs due to the jaws themselves (rather than the teeth) developing incorrectly. Although this jaw malformation is unlikely to change, it may be subject to variations in severity as the puppy grows. Many puppies do not suffer any discomfort as a result of this condition.

There is no way to surgically correct this problem, but there are a few procedures which could alleviate any potential discomfort caused by teeth impinging on the gums and palate.

Although this puppy's upper jaw remained longer than the lower, you can clearly see from the position of the canine teeth, that the lower jaw continued to advance considerably after the permanent teeth had erupted. This puppy did not undergo any procedures and has had no difficulty eating, neither has she experienced any obvious signs of pain, soreness or infections of her mouth. **It is vitally important to regularly check your puppy's mouth for any signs of trauma.**

10 weeks front – lower jaw inside upper

10 weeks side – lower canines set well behind upper



At 15 weeks, both jaws have lengthened. By 20 weeks, the lower jaw has lengthened and the permanent upper canine tooth is beginning to develop before the 'baby' tooth has been shed.



At 23 weeks both permanent canines are developing. By 14 months both canines have fully erupted and the lower jaw has lengthened further