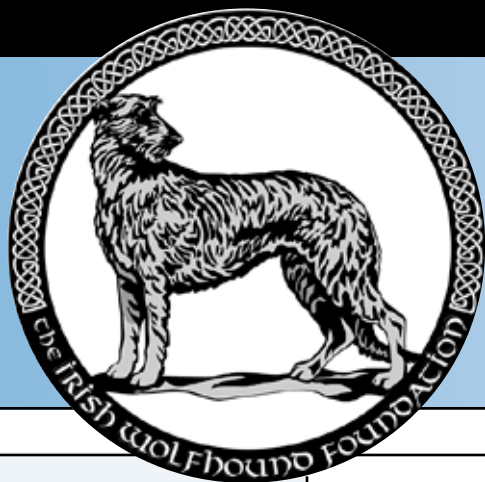


# THE Irish Wolfhound Foundation



# Focus

Winter 2009

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The Irish Wolfhound Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Your donation is tax deductible to the full amount allowed by law.

## Focus

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## A Word From Doug Marx, The New President of The Irish Wolfhound Foundation

I am honored to have been asked to lead the Irish Wolfhound Foundation (IWF), an organization that has a firm mission of the health and welfare of our breed.

Through my wife, Amy Benjamin, I was introduced to this breed during my college years

in the early eighties. I have been heavily involved in breeding and showing our hounds ever since. With an extensive background in livestock, mainly in horses, I feel that health and functionality is most important in any breeding program. Responsible breeding is a must in any breed and with that said I would like to challenge the Wolfhound community to keep open communication with each other regarding health. I am NOT naive to think that will happen as a matter of course, but we must face the facts that we have health issues that will affect the future of our breed.

I would like to mention four new members, beside myself, that have recently joined the Board of the IWF. First, Audrey St. Clair of Lititz, Pennsylvania, who, as you will see is our new Editor of the Focus; Mary O'Malley of Springfield, Virginia who has taken over the duties of Secretary; Eugenia

Hunter of Makanda, Illinois, who will bring her expertise of counsel and her experience with other non profits, and Anne Janis of Fayetteville, Georgia. Anne will bring

her vast knowledge of our breed through her involvement in the Irish Wolfhound Studies organization (IWS).

Within these pages you will read about how the IWF & the IWS have come together for a common goal.

It has come to my attention that there are some misconceptions of the relationship between the IWF and the Irish Wolfhound Club of America. Although both organizations have many of the same goals and work together towards those goals, it must be understood that they are two completely different organizations. The IWF is comprised of a thirteen member Board of Directors, has its own mission statement, charter, and bylaws. The IWF holds a 501(c)(3) tax status, which at present the IWCA does not. All IWF business is conducted through the above mentioned Board of Directors.

The IWF relies on monetary donations to fund "grants" for health studies, educational programs and rescue assistance, I encourage Regional Clubs to seek our help with funding events

and activities in these areas. For example, this year at two different specialties the IWF subsidized Echo Cardiograms, this testing provides not only data for the Life Time Cardiac Study but also makes Echo's affordable to owners that might not be inclined to test their hounds because of the cost. The IWF sponsors or co-sponsors educational seminars held in conjunction with planned Specialty activities. One such is written about in this publication. For more information about the IWF please take a few minutes and

(Continued on Page 2)

Presidents Message IW  
Winter 2009



Doug Marx enjoying his passion.

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# Idiopathic Epilepsy in the Irish Wolfhound Update

Principal Investigators:  
Margret L. Casal, Dr. med. Vet.,  
PhD, Dipl. ECAR,  
Petra Werner, Dr. med. Vet,  
Paula S. Henthorn, PhD;  
University of Pennsylvania, School of Veterinary  
Medicine, Section of Medical Genetics; 3850  
Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6010

The overall objective of this study is to identify the gene lesion (mutation) responsible for idiopathic epilepsy in the Irish wolfhound. Specific aims are to perform genome wide association studies, fine map-

ping and ultimately mutation identification. Through your generous funds, we have been able to complete the first objective of the specific aims and have located several candidate genes that we have begun sequencing. In the meantime, we have sent data from the genome wide association study to Dr. Bustamante at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell in Ithaca for further statistical evaluation.



Specifically, 8 of the top scores localized to chromosome 22 and 15 of the top 25 localized to the same chromosome, indicating the significance of this area on chromosome 22. While waiting for Dr. Bustamante's analysis of more SNPs, we have begun sequencing two candidate genes on chromosome 22 that are expressed in the brain. Once the data comes back from Dr. Bustamante we will be able to proceed with sequencing more candidate genes.

## Joining Forces

I am pleased to announce that after several months of preparation The Irish Wolfhound Studies, Inc will join The Irish Wolfhound Foundation under the banner of the IW Foundation.

All of the research projects that were funded by IW Studies will continue to receive grants from the Foundation. The web sites for both will run concurrently for a few months. Information and study entry questionnaires or links to them will be available on both sites. I will continue to handle the seizure study as before.

We believe that the breed will be a better served by centralizing these research projects and resources.

— Anne Janis



Andrea Dormady, right of MA was in NYC with her hounds for a photo shoot when they ran into actor Denis Leary. He has owned Irish Wolfhounds in the past and was glad to meet both Andrea and her hounds.

## President's Message

(Continued from front cover)

visit our web site @ [www.iwfoundation.org/](http://www.iwfoundation.org/)

I would like to thank everyone that has previously donated to the Foundation and hope that your support will continue in the future. Also, thank you to my fellow Board members of the IWF and those Board members of the IWCA who serve utilizing their own time and resources. I look forward to the Wolfhound community working together toward our common goal, the preservation of our precious breed.

The Irish Wolfhound Foundation, Inc.

### Treasurer's Report

January 1, 2009 ~ To date

<u>Quarter</u>	<u>Donations</u>	<u>Disbursements</u>
First Quarter	\$780.97	\$390.00
Second Quarter	\$6940.97	\$11582.74
Third Quarter	\$9928.61	\$4349.00
Fourth Quarter to date	\$8125.00	\$5404.12
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$25775.55</b>	<b>\$21725.86</b>

*\*note total Donations include donations to the endowment*

There are over \$8000.00 in committed grants and expenses yet in 2009

# IWF Co-Sponsors Seminar with IWADV

Mary O'Malley

The Irish Wolfhound Foundation and the Irish Wolfhound Association of the Delaware Valley presented a seminar on Saturday, October 3, 2009 as part of IWADV's 2009 specialty pre-show events. The presenter was Dr. Melanie Mercer, DVM, and was entitled "Keeping Your Geriatric IW Healthy, Happy and Pain Free."

The focus of the seminar was on keeping our Wolfhounds fit and healthy throughout their lives, recognizing and diagnosing orthopedic problems as early as possible, and managing problems once they arise.

In smaller breeds of dogs "going down in the rear," whether due to a spinal or hip problem or some other reason, can sometimes be managed by the owner as a last resort by using a sling or cart to support the dog's rear and controlling pain. For Wolfhounds, that is not often feasible.

There are things owners can do to forestall rear end weakness, though. These are in addition to regular vet and dental care.

First and foremost is to make sure your dog is not overweight. Dr. Mercer showed the group a diagram found online at Purina.com that shows how to assess your dog's body condition. As I'm sure many of us have been told, you should be able to easily feel but not see your dog's ribs, you should see a waist when looking at the dog from above (and most of us are tall enough to do that), and the dog should have a tuck up when viewed from the side. If we are going to err it is better for the dog to be a little too thin than a little too fat, for a whole variety of health reasons. Just like in people.

Secondly your dog should be in good condition. Some dogs build muscle more easily than others, but any dog will benefit from being in better condition. (Note that you should always have your vet check your dog before beginning a conditioning program, start slowly, and make it fun.) It is far easier to start conditioning a dog before

problems arise than it is to try and fix those problems. Learn to measure your dog's heart rate (you can feel a pulse inside the hind leg where it attaches to the body), and track the resting heart rate as you follow your conditioning program. The rate should go down over time as the dog becomes more fit; aim for a resting heart rate of about 50 beats per minute and then strive to maintain that condition.

Some conditioning exercises are simple and appropriate for all ages, like going for walks on different kinds of terrain, while others focus on strengthening core muscles so the spine is better supported. One of the most surprising of those exercises was one little practiced in the IW world: having your dog sit up and beg. It makes sense when you think about the muscles required to balance in that position, but a lot of people in the audience were amused at the mental image, and knowing how often our puppies seem to be clueless about where various body parts are it might be something better tried with a mature, coordinated dog. Swimming is a great exercise for those dogs who will indulge in it. A lot of agility obstacles (or IW-sized variations) also turn out to be good for core muscles, and help a dog be more conscious of where he's placing his feet. And my dogs were particularly happy to hear that among other things, digging is very good for strengthening front leg muscles! Many of the recommended exercises are demonstrated on a DVD by sports medicine veterinarian Dr. Christine Zink, DVM, Ph.D., DAVCP called BUILDING THE CANINE ATHLETE, and Dr. Mercer's handout,



Mercer presenting "Keeping your Geriatric IW Healthy, Happy and Pain Free." at the IWADV Specialty in October.

which suggests quite a few exercises, will be made available on the IWF website soon for the benefit of those who were unable to attend the seminar.

Dr. Mercer also discussed various nutritional supplements which can make a positive difference in orthopedic health. Again, it is best to start these before problems arise, as many are meant to strengthen cartilage, and if you wait till degeneration has started there will be less cartilage to strengthen. Glucosamine chondroitin has shown effectiveness in studies; as with all supplements you need to choose your source carefully to make sure you get the active ingredients as labeled (for more information see Consumer Reports magazine's rather eye-opening investigation into supplements in 2006; you can also look for the USP seal on products which meet the pharmaceutical guidelines of the U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP), a non-profit group, and are subject to random off-the-shelf testing). If you are looking to save money, rather than buy a cheap brand you should look for a product from a respected brand (Cosequin and Synovi were mentioned) that is labeled for horses, as it tends to be more cost-effective per dose than products labeled for dogs. Some of the supplements may also be beneficial for other health conditions, such as the Omega 3 fatty acids in fish oil, and DHA. With any nutritional supplement it will probably be about 3-4 weeks before you see any effect.

Chiropractic treatment and acupuncture can also be helpful to symptomatic dogs, if you can find a reputable practitioner who is licensed to treat animals.

Lastly, there are a few simple things you can do to try and find orthopedic problems



Dr Mercer addressing the attentive audience under the show tent at the IWADV Specialty in Morgantown PA.

Photos by Mary O'Malley

(Continued on Page 5)



# Cardiomyopathy In Irish Wolfhounds

**Robert Brenneman DVD**

The most common form of cardiomyopathy in the Irish Wolfhound, (IWH) is the dilated cardiomyopathy form, (DCM) affecting both the right and left sides of the heart. 83.3% will have concurrent atrial fibrillation. The IWH with DCM has a higher survival rate than DCM seen in breeds such as the Boxer, Doberman and Great Dane.

In one study done by AAHA Journal of Veterinary Medicine in 2000, 50% of the IWH diagnosed with cardiomyopathy survived through the end of the study, over 15 months. In this study of 500 IWH conducted by Dr. Vollmar in Germany, 24.2% (122 dogs) had DCM, (diagnosed by echocardiography). Males have a significantly higher incidence than females, suggesting a sex link predisposition and it seems to follow family lines with DCM diagnosed in closely related dogs in every generation. In this study 121 IWH with DMC, 119 had at least one parent that had been diagnosed with DCM, suggesting an autosomal dominant gene. Onset of the disease is usually between 3-7 years of age.

Clinical signs of DCM in the IWH are most commonly the result of pleural effusion: accumulation of fluid in the chest cavity. This is a by-product to right sided heart



failure. Pleural effusion signs are a result of mechanical restriction of respiration. Early diagnosis is difficult, because of the vagueness or absence of clinical signs. As the amount of fluid accumulates to significant quantities to physically restrict the amount of available lung capacity clinical signs will become more apparent. There will be an increase in the respiratory rate, which will be noticed during periods of exercise and then later also at rest, as the quantities of fluids continue to build up. As the effusions further increase, the increased respirations will progress to labored, distressed breathing. The dog will resist laying on their side, preferring to rest in a sternal position.

Some will opt to either stand or sit with their elbows abducted to provide for added expansion of their chest. They will often extend their head and necks in an attempt to make breathing easier. The dog may appear restless, especially in warm weather, and many may become anorexic. Coughing is often not a clinical sign of DCM. In young dogs affected with DCM, 1-2 years of age, acute death many times will be the only clinical sign.

As a breed the Irish Wolfhound with DCM has a higher survivability than many

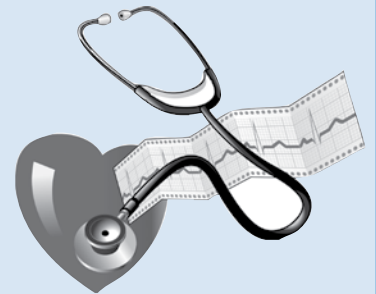
other breeds, only rarely does their left ventricular function become as compromised as in the other breeds. Also, the IWH seems to respond better to treatments than the other breeds. Diagnosis of DCM in an IWH is not necessarily a death sentence as many can live to old age. Early detection with early initiation of an ACE inhibitor such as enalapril, and when indicated, digoxin and other antiarrhythmic drugs, will increase survivability in the IWH. Prevention of a disease is always the most prudent route to go and in the case of DCM in the IWH careful breeding protocols by not breeding to known carriers will go a long way in eliminating this disease in the breed. Below are echocardiographic parameters published by Dr. Andrea C. Vollmar, a clinician with Small Animal Veterinary Hospital of Wisen, Germany. Her values differ from the standards for other breeds in determining whether an IWH has DCM or not. Here are her cut offs for the IWH and DCM: LVIDs > 41mm, LVIDd > 61.2mm, FS < 25%, EPSS > 10.0mm, ESVI > 41ml/m<sup>2</sup>, RVIDd > 36.8mm. Values that may diagnose a Golden Retriever with DCM may be normal for an IWH. Dr. Vollmars' research is quite extensive, as she has tested many hundreds of hounds. Hopefully, in the near future, we will have genetic markers to help identify carriers of DCM.

## ***Future Testing - 2010 National Specialty***

The Irish Wolfhound Foundation is again sponsoring testing at the 2010 National Specialty to be held in California. Echocardiograms will be offered for \$75 per hound with the Foundation subsidizing the balance. Testing will be done by Dr. Tyrrell Jr. of Leesburg VA. Anyone that has had Echos done on their own knows what a great deal this is! The echo is painless and non-invasive, and allows the cardiologist to visualize and assess the overall health of the heart. Some of the things an echo can show are leakage of blood through the valves, the size of the heart, abnormal communications between the left and the right side of the heart, and the heart muscle contractility.

Dr. Tyrrell will also be presenting an update on the Lifetime Cardiac Study on Wednesday evening of the Specialty. Details will be in the premium list and on the IWF and IWCA web sites as received.

Take the Time  
To return the



**Lifetime Cardiac  
Study Data**

*Your Hounds are Counting on You!*

PLANNED GIVING

By Eugenia C. Hunter

Your life's labor has made a difference in the lives of Irish Wolfhounds. The fruits of your labor can continue to make a difference when you make a legacy to the Irish Wolfhound Foundation. Your gift to Irish Wolfhound Foundation will stand as a lasting monument to your love and concern for Irish Wolfhounds.

Add the following language to your will:

I hereby give, devise and bequeath the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (or, \_\_\_ shares of my \_\_\_\_\_ stock) (or \_\_\_ % of my estate to the Irish Wolfhound Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) organization (EIN \_\_\_\_\_), c/o David C. Milne, Treasurer, 150 Creek Road, Phillipsburg, NJ 08854.

Similar language may also be added to a living trust.

Other planned giving possibilities include:

1) Name the Irish Wolfhound Foundation as the beneficiary or contingent beneficiary to some or all of your qualified retirement plans. For 2009, the IRS has extended charitable provisions for IRA's allowing account owners age 70 1/2 or older to distribute up to \$100,000 from an IRA directly to a qualifying charity, federal income tax free. This donation may be used to satisfy the IRA minimum distribution requirement for the year. These provisions cover most traditional IRA's. (SIMPLE and SEP-IRA's are also eligible but only if the plan is "inactive" meaning no contributions have been made to the plan this year.)

2) Add the Irish Wolfhound Foundation as a beneficiary or contingent beneficiary to your life insurance.

3) Create a charitable remainder trust. This is a trust to pay, for a given period, income to a beneficiary you select, and after that period, the remaining assets pass to the Irish Wolfhound Foundation.

4) Create a charitable lead trust. The reverse of a charitable remainder trust. The Irish Wolfhound Foundation receives the income for a given period of time and the remaining assets pass to a beneficiary you select after that period.

For more information about making a planned gift to the Irish Wolfhound Foundation, please consult your attorney and tax consultant. There are many other potential strategies to effect tax advantaged gifts, but many of them are complex and the laws in this area frequently change.

Thank you for your past contributions.

*In Memoriam*

**Karen F. Malone**

January 30, 1942 - December 29, 2008



*Thank you Karen for your caring and dedicated support*

**Seminar** (Continued from Page 3)

before your dog shows obvious symptoms, so appropriate treatment can start before too much damage has occurred. Doing them once a week or so will help you not only to spot possible problems but also to know what is normal for your dog. Dr. Mercer demonstrated a couple of these techniques for the group. One involved starting at the neck on your standing dog and working your hand down the

spine, essentially massaging around the spine, watching for any pain response or odd reflex reaction. Another is to gently stretch each leg out to full extension, one at a time, again watching for a pain response or unusual resistance. Also watch to see that your dog puts his foot back down normally (not knuckled under). Anything out of the ordinary should be followed up with your vet.

Many thanks to Dr. Mercer for introducing us to some simple ideas for helping our dogs stay fit and functional through their golden years.



(Left) Dr Mercer demonstrated a simple spinal exam that could help find orthopedic problems before your dog shows the obvious symptoms.

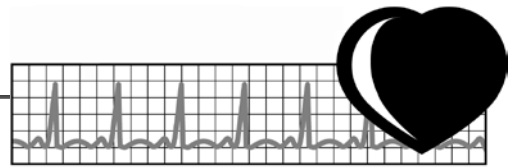
(Right) Gently stretch each leg out to full extension, one at a time, watching for a pain response or unusual resistance.



Photos by Mary O'Malley

# Heart Disease

## A Leading Cause of Death In IWs



by Mariellen Dentino, MD

All over the world heart disease is a leading cause of death in the Irish Wolfhound. The IW has a small gene pool and breed specific cardiac abnormalities. This makes breed specific studies to address these problems essential. The Irish Wolfhound Foundation has sponsored many of these studies.

Dr. Henry Green, Purdue University, has documented abnormal hormonal levels in IWs with atrial fibrillation (an abnormal heart rhythm) common to many IWs even if the hound has a normal echocardiogram. Dr. Green is writing a grant proposal to study these hormonal changes in greater detail. He is hoping to correlate a hormonal level (a blood test) with heart disease in our hounds.

Dr. Sarah Hunter, Colorado State University, has shown with her study that the heart rate on screening EKGs does not correlate with heart rate on the 24 hour holter monitor. Again suggesting different protocols for treatment may be helpful.

Dr. Jan Bright, Colorado State University, has studied the effects of digoxin on the heart rates of hounds in atrial fibrillation and also established a "normal" heart rate and blood pressure for the Irish Wolfhound.

In 1948 little was known about human cardiac disease. Residents in a small town in Massachusetts were enrolled in a long term study using follow-up questions and exams and storing blood samples, EKGs, blood pressure, height, and weight measurements. An explosion of information resulted. The Framingham study provided basic information that changed all concepts of cardiac disease in humans.

In 2000 the IWF funded the Irish Wolfhound Lifetime Cardiac Study hoping for the same explosion of information. Preliminary data from Dr. Neil Harpster and Dr. Serena Brownlie suggested 1000 dogs needed to be followed during their lifetime to answer basic questions. 1266 dogs were enrolled in the study. Unfortunately follow-up was much more difficult than expected. As of 2009 follow-up information was not complete for 743 dogs. Much data has been accumulated and has been and will be useful for the future endeavors but proven answers to some basic questions will not be obtained due to the high number of "drop out" owners. The study is projected to terminate in 2010 as very few entered hounds will have survived past this date. An effort will be made to contact owners who have not responded before final data is completed.

The life span of 6.7 years is confirmed by this study. There is information on 481 dogs that have died. Many thanks extended to the owners who responded faithfully year after year. The mean age of death, 6.7 years has remained the same since 2000.

Causes of death have also varied little. Cancer claimed 28.9% with osteosarcoma 17.3% of the total deaths at the average age of 6.8 years. Dogs with lymphoma, 4.8% of cancer deaths, died at an average age of 5.5 years. Heart disease claimed the lives of 17% of the hounds with an average age of death 7.3 years. Next in line was torsion claiming 5% of the hounds who died at the average age of 5.7 years. This was followed by rear paralysis at 3.3%, respiratory disease (pneumonia) 3.3%, kidney failure 2.1%, sudden death 1.7%, unknown 3.1% and no answer provided for 18-5% of the dogs.

Data thus far confirms Dr. Neil Harpster's observations from 1995-1998



Photo by Mary O'Malley

that by age six 30% of IWs are in an abnormal heart rhythm called atrial fibrillation. Many of these dogs die of something else but over half do die from their heart disease. Genetics plays a large part in the heart disease of the Irish Wolfhound with autosomal dominant transmission with modulators being suspected by investigators. The factors leading to cardiac death in this population will be further defined by data from the study.

In the study it was noted that 8% of the 1266 dogs tested had premature ventricular beats on an EKG. 1.9% of the dogs with PVCs died of sudden death. 25% of the dogs with PVCs died of heart disease. But when the data was examined more closely no dog was reported to have died of heart disease with only PVCs recorded on their EKG. The other dogs dying in this group had a-fib and cardiomyopathy. In Dobermans and Boxers PVCs on a screening EKG portends the rapid development of dilated cardiomyopathy. However in Wolfhounds these abnormal beats do not seem to have such dire consequences. To save hounds and the owners unnecessary expense and worry The Irish Wolfhound Foundation has funded a study with veterinary cardiologist Dr. Bill Tyrrell to examine IWs with PVCs as the only EKG abnormality. The study is ongoing and needs more dogs to participate.

Data from the Lifetime Cardiac Study showed all hounds except two had atrial fibrillation diagnosed prior to or at the onset of symptomatic heart failure. This is different in other breeds where the atrial fibrillation usually follows the development of dilated cardiomyopathy. This is very important from both the diagnostic and treatment perspective. If a screening EKG can diagnose our hounds with early heart disease a yearly screening echo may not be needed. Because the incidence of atrial fibrillation rises so rapidly with age, some screening is a yearly need in our breed but the EKG is more readily available and vastly less expensive.

A study to determine if an EKG is a satisfactory screening test for heart disease in Irish Wolfhounds is underway by veterinary cardiologists Dr. Bill Tyrrell and Dr. Henry Green. Over 200 dogs have been enrolled in the study with a goal of 500 dogs hoped for. This study will also be able to determine the incidence of heart valve disease in Irish Wolfhounds. Many breeds have inherited heart valve disease but it has not been identified in a large number of IWs.

## Recipe for Finny Bunnies

Contributed by Frances Abrams

These cookies were developed as the result of a fortunate accident involving a recipe calling for chicken and a chickenless pantry under the supervision of my wolfhounds (also chief suspects in the disappearance of the chicken). The consensus of the those taste testers, and many others, is that, although there is something fishy about these rabbits, they are good. In fact they are too good to leave the house. Mind the cookie dough as most dogs see no reason for all the trouble involved in rolling, cutting and baking cookies.

1 can pink salmon  
1 cup broth (turkey, chicken, vegetable or beef) or water  
1 egg  
1 cup chopped fresh parsley  
3 cloves minced garlic  
2 T brewers yeast (optional)  
2 T bone meal (optional)  
1 T vegetable oil  
Puree the above ingredients together in a blender (It works best if you put the parsley in first) until you have a thick liquid. Pour into a large bowl and add:  
1 and 1/2 cups wheat germ  
1 cup corn meal  
Mix well and then add about:  
2 cups whole wheat flour( or more)

Knead for a few minutes, adding flour as necessary. Form into a ball and put in the refrigerator for about an hour. Roll out thin and cut out into biscuits. I use a rabbit-shaped cookie cutter, hence the name. Bake at 350oF for 20-30 minutes, turning once during the baking. Cool on a rack out of reach of dogs.

I am told by a non-wolfhound friend that these cookies keep well if allowed to cool thoroughly before packaging. In my house they have never lasted long enough to verify this.

If you want the kitchen to really smell and your dogs to love you all the more, you can substitute salmon oil for the vegetable oil.





# The Irish Foundation gratefully acknowledges contributions from the following supporters

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**The Irish Wolfhound Foundation**



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