MY LIFE WITH IRISH WOLFHOUND I fell in love with this wonderful breed nearly 50 years ago - 3 years later I purchased my first, all I wanted was a pet, so showing did not come into the equation al that stage, I was just delighted to own one. As you can imagine they were not easy to find, very soon followed a wonderful male, what a loyal, faithful character he tuned out to be - now I was completely besotted. It was several years later when I decided to enter the show ring, of which at first I had a moderate success, but thoroughly enjoyed my hobby, meeting, talking, and learning more about our breed. My worst year was in 1989 when I lost 3 bitches within 10 months, one aged 9 years, but the other two were so tragic, one due to simple kennel cough which turned to pneumonia, she was only 2 ½ years old. Then an extremely nice bitch aged 16 months who had been moderately shown with great success, ate a foreign object, had to have an emergency operation, had 6 foot of her stomach removed after a 3 ½ hour operation, sadly died the same night, it was so very tragic, both these young bitches had so much potential, I was very close to coming out of the breed. This breed - How it breaks our hearts. I have had many happy hours with the “gang” - half life outside in the kennels, its generally the youngster who come into the house for part of the day, whilst the oldies are almost permanent house dogs - all have been indoors at some stage - I believe it is important that they all spend time indoors, to be given affection, how can you get to know your dogs personality if the are kenneled all day. Breeding is very exciting, always endeavouring to get the ultimate perfect animal, which of course does not exist, it is important to let female become fully mature before breeding. I personally believe 2 ½ years in the earliest you should breed. Choosing the correct male is not always easy, but we should try to improve on any faults, by careful selection. But the most important thing to me is the temperament followed by health, to me an animal with bad temperament is a “lethal weapon” on a lead. Health is also paramount, we all thankfully, in the UK seem to talk more and more openly on health problem, and the caring breeders will never deliberately breed or use stock known to hereditary illnesses, sadly heart disease and cancer are still the biggest killers of our breed. We are also aware certainly in the UK of P.R.A. and Liver Shunt, which are certainly hereditary. Health problems aside, breeding good quality Wolfhounds is exciting, generally one or two catch my eye very early on in their lives - but the best time to study is eight or nine weeks - they leave me around twelve weeks as I believe socialising with brothers and sisters is very important.

SOME QUESTIONS TO THE BREEDER - JUDGE

1) The Irish wolfhound is a dog with “great size and commanding appearence”. What is the ideal size for a male and a female and what is your definition of “commanding appearence”?

*Commanding appearance - means to me, flowing lines, substance, power, strong though gracefully built, carrying themselves with confidence, head and neck held proudly, moving with gracious ease.*

2) It’s my impression that in the different countries there is a different opinion appraising an Irish wolfhound e.g. hind and fore quarter angulation, tail length and set, size, etc. What characteristic do you believe more worthy when judging an Irish wolfhound?

*A strong hound capable of hunting large prey! That’s what they were bred for. Overall balance - powerful neck, good head and ear carriage, correct shoulder, good depth, well developed ribs, correctly angulated and muscle behind, with substance and power.*

3) How important is the head in your opinion?

*Heads should have a good dark eyes giving true gentleness anything less gives a hard cold expression - neat ears, good bite, correct length of muzzle, strength to the jaw, not too broad - I believe a good head is important.*

4) What is the most serious fault of the Irish wolfhounds in your country?

*at the moment in the UK vary - ranging from too short in leg, light in eye, lacking substance, too long in loin, no spring of ribs - no one particular thing stands out.*

5) What dog, in the present or in the past, is the nearest to your ideal Irish wolfhound? And why?

*No strong favourites but to name a few, Hydbeck Reginald Snuffson, Caredig Yankee Doodle, Erindale Callan of Finloren, Marumac Bahbarella, Eaglescrag Lysander. There are many more but these certainly stick in my mind over the last ten years.*