

# THE IRISH WOLFHOUND RESCUE TRUST

## Living with an Irish Wolfhound

Think carefully before you decide to share your home with an Irish Wolfhound, he is not as other dogs. He is the King amongst dogs and will rule your life completely.

Everything will change; your life, your house, your car, will be totally re-arranged around him. Wolfhounds are kindly, tolerant dogs, gentle by nature, but do not be misled by the Gentle Giant image; a young hound can be boisterous with great personality.

Great care must be taken, particularly with small children, who can easily be knocked over, albeit unintentionally, and badly hurt. Wolfhounds do not realise just how big they are and that welcoming tail can catch both child and adult a tidy wallop!

He can spell disaster for the bijou ornaments and Dresden china. No longer can bowls of fruit, or other delicacies be left at counter level. Such items need to be placed at picture rail level and even then, nothing is sacred to a hound hell-bent on self-service!

Wolfhounds are the tallest and heaviest of the hound group and are "people" dogs! They need to be with you, not shut up 9 'til 5, whilst owners are out at work all day. The mournful howls of a lonely hound will disturb the entire parish, not just the next door neighbours and may make you most unpopular. As well as people, they enjoy the company of other dogs.

He is not a guard, he has been born and bred to be a hunter! Adult Wolfhounds can grow to around 3 feet (90+cm) tall at the shoulder and weigh up to 14 stones.

His great size may be a deterrent to the uninitiated, but to keep an Irish Wolfhound locked in a builder's yard overnight is ludicrous. A lonely, bored hound will probably welcome any intruder to liven up an otherwise dull evening!

Many health problems are associated with the hound's great size and growth rate, but can be avoided with careful, sensible management. Running wild, chasing to keep up with older dogs, jumping over walls, racing up and down stairs, mad frolics with children, or other puppies, must all be avoided. In fact, you must avoid letting your puppy do anything that can bruise, jar or injure those rapidly growing long bones and the delicate cartilage within his joints.

Prepare his bed before you leave home to pick him up. A soft single bed mattress in a quiet corner of your kitchen, not close to direct heat, but draught-free, is ideal. Cover the mattress with a blanket or a rug, which can be washed frequently. He must always have a place he can call his own, where he can sleep peacefully, out from under your feet and away from hazards.

Soft bedding is imperative. As he grows in size and weight, his joints must be protected; otherwise he may develop bursitis. These unsightly, sometimes painful swellings develop mostly on elbows, but hocks and 'bottoms' can also be affected and it may be six months or more before they disappear.

Adult hounds must be fed twice a day, never one large meal to be eaten all at once. One hour before and two hours after every meal, he should always be kept quiet and violent activity forbidden. This is to minimize the risk of the potentially fatal condition called gastric torsion, or "bloat". i.e. - a heavy full stomach turning over on itself and blocking both ends, blowing up like an enormous balloon. This condition needs immediate veterinary attention, as death can ultimately arise from shock and heart failure.

Wolfhounds can become fat easily, so a careful watch must always be maintained on their weight and an ageing hound is better fed smaller meals more often. They are prodigious drinkers - a bucket of fresh water should be available at all times, making sure that the inside is thoroughly cleaned out every morning, before refilling.

Contaminated water can lead to unexpected infections. Both food and water should be given at comfortable head/chest height, at least 18" off the floor, so that nourishment goes down with gravity, not against it.

This also prevents splaying of elbows and feet to reach down to the bowls.

Aim at daily grooming and with luck your hound will be done three or four times a week. Regular grooming gives you the chance to notice any small abrasions, cuts, or lumps, which can be difficult to see in a hound with a good coat. Teeth, ears, toenails and anal glands also need careful, regular attention.

Fleas, mites and ticks, can appear in the most meticulous establishment. Your vet will advise you how best to rid your hound (and home) of these unwelcome visitors. Show dogs are tidied up by 'stripping out' overlong hairs with finger and thumb. This keeps them looking smart and elegant and retains their graceful lines. Your companion hound will feel and look better with similar attention. A regular rub down with a piece of terry towelling soaked in a bucket of warm water and Savlon, will keep him smelling sweet and clean and remove dirty, greasy oil from his coat.

Wolfhounds' long tails are a constant source of worry, easily damaged within the home on sharp corners of cookers, etc. These cuts can add to your decor with bloody brush marks all over the walls! The slightest scratch must never go untreated, as it can be slow to heal, become infected and result in amputation of part or even the whole tail.

The mature hound will take up a considerable amount of your time every single day, to exercise him properly and keep him in good condition. As a youngster, he must be protected from persistent children who relentlessly want to play with him. He will need plenty of rest and sleep whilst growing. Exercise must be built up gradually and consistently. 'Once round the block' every day with a ten-mile hike Sunday morning, is not the answer.

Training your Wolfhound is of utmost importance and should begin immediately, the moment he comes into your home. He must be brainwashed into thinking you are always bigger and stronger than he is. A playful puppy jumping up, may be cute, but a fourteen stone adult hound, hurling himself at the unsuspecting, can flatten the

largest human! Lead training will require a half-check collar or a head collar. A 'Halti' or 'Gentle Leader' may be used with great success. A harness is not suitable as this fits around the chest and gives the dog more power. The sight of his lead should always fill him with pleasure, but he must never be allowed to pull on his lead.

Don't expect too much from your Wolfhound, he is a hunter, not a working dog. He should come to you when called, stop when told, sit and lie down on command and walk well on a lead. Never trust your hound with stock, the hunting instinct is very strong. The hound's motto is, 'if it moves - chase it!'

Your Wolfhound should never be allowed the opportunity to chase and kill stock. If he does – it is your fault.

Never physically chastise your Wolfhound, he will lose confidence in you and never forgive you.

A disapproving tone of voice is usually sufficient, but if he has been particularly bad, seize the loose skin each side of his neck, shake it vigorously and shout your displeasure at his behaviour.

From time to time he will need veterinary attention, which can be expensive. Yearly booster injections are recommended and insurance is also worth considering (and mandatory for a rescued wolfhound - see adoption contract conditions).

Be warned, Wolfhounds can be addictive! Once you have shared your life with one Wolfhound, it is almost inevitable that you will want another and will never want to be without a Wolfhound again.

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