

The CHIC Journey

By Jacqueline Carswell - CHIC Liaison

Where do I start? What tests do I ask for? What if the University I choose to perform my Irish Wolfhound's health tests doesn't routinely do the examinations I've requested? My routine veterinarian can perform an EKG, will that be all right? I have all of those tests performed; I just don't send them in, why bother? Why do you even health test? This is just a small example of the questions I've been asked when an IW owner inquires about obtaining their hound's CHIC certificate and entering that hound in the CHIC database. First, let me list the IWCA recommended health tests that are needed to achieve your hound's CHIC certificate.

- 1. A canine ophthalmologist should examine your hound's eyes.**
- 2. His/her hips and elbows should be radiographed.**
- 3. A canine cardiologist should perform the following heart tests:**
 - Auscultation**
 - EKG**
 - Echocardiogram.**

My task is to take you, the reader, along with me on a journey as one of my hounds and I complete the requirements for certification and inclusion into the CHIC database.

Permanent identification is a prerequisite for a hound's submission into the CHIC database or when contributing DNA to the CHIC repository. Microchips are my personal choice for permanent identification. Tattooing is another option and preferred by many over microchips. Whichever you prefer, make sure to have your dog permanently identified.

The next step I take is to call the University of FL in Gainesville. They have, in my opinion, top-notch anesthesia, orthopedic, ophthalmology and cardiac departments.

It's important that you clarify for the cardiologist that your breed required tests for inclusion into the CHIC database call for an EKG *as well as* an Echocardiogram. Most Veterinary teaching Universities require only auscultation of the heart for OFA cardiac clearance. Our breed has cardiac issues often missed on an EKG that an echocardiogram will detect. Cardiologists are always willing to fulfill your request once they understand why you are asking for more in-depth exams. It's convenient and financially helpful when dog clubs offer health clinics at their shows and offer heart testing by canine cardiologists. Take advantage of these when you can but make sure you have the proper paperwork when you leave. You need to make sure you have the results of the EKG and Echo on the OFA (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals) cardiac submission form and that the cardiologist has signed it. You need to submit this form to the OFA.

The next appointment I make is for hip and elbow x-rays. You need to speak with your veterinarian and decide if sedation, anesthesia or no sedation will be used. Make sure you are comfortable with the choice you make and be sure that the best radiographs can be obtained with the least amount of stress to your hound. For these reasons, I choose to have my hounds undergo general anesthesia. Propofol and Isoflurine are always used. They go under quickly, high quality radiographs are taken and they come out from under the anesthesia very quickly as well. None of my hounds have ever had a reaction to these particular anesthetic drugs and they are able to walk on their own with no assistance within minutes after completion of the exam. I submit the radiographs along with the signed evaluation form supplied to me by the Radiologist/Veterinarian to the OFA for evaluation and OFA number assignment.

The last appointment I make is for the eye examination. The procedure is very quick. It usually takes longer to fill out the paperwork and for my hound's eyes to be dilated than it does to perform the exam. The Ophthalmologist will discuss the results with you and give you a signed form to submit to CERF (Canine Eye

Registration Foundation).

Once all of these tests have been performed and the paper work turned in to OFA and CERF, the results will automatically be sent to the CHIC database for inclusion, you do not need to do anything else and your hound's CHIC certificate will automatically be generated and mailed to you.

Each OFA submission form provides a box for the owner to check and initial, allowing the OFA to make public any positive test results; positive meaning the dog is affected with the disease for which it is being tested. I always check these boxes as I feel providing all tests results are crucial. How are we to have a useful database with only normal results reported? How will it benefit the breed or help future Irish Wolfhound breeders, owners and researchers? It is also important to repeat the heart and eye exams yearly, if possible, to help keep the database updated with any changes that may have occurred with your hound's health. I choose to support the IWCA's decision to participate in the CHIC program because of my commitment to the health of our breed and to provide full disclosure of the health of my hounds. Will you join me in doing so?

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