

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am honored as Vice President of the French Club to present to you the brief history and activities of our association.

R.A.L.I.E. (Rassemblement des Amateurs de Lévrier d' Irlande et d' Ecosse) was founded in 1974 by Professor Alain Thomas. It is effectively at this time period that the first imports of Irish Wolfhounds began principally through Ireland. Even if one can find the presence of some Irish Wolfhounds in France well before 1974, constructive breeding in our country only started at the end of the 70's, early 80's. From a handful of breeders producing around a dozen puppies each year, we have attained in 30 years more than 200 puppies annually raised by some twenty regular breeders. Foreign influence is naturally strong in our breeding program, which is based on Irish, English, German, Swiss and Dutch lines. After numerous years establishing a sufficient genetic stock, some French lines are beginning now to emerge and establish themselves.

Our association is celebrating its thirty-year anniversary, twenty of those years under the presidency of Mr. Besson who, with 420 members, has made R.A.L.I.E. the number one sighthound club in France. It is important to note that the club incorporates Deerhound enthusiasts as well.

We publish four magazines a year, which discuss subjects as diverse as feeding, pathology, grooming, results of French and foreign, shows, and breeder news.

At present, we organize one national specialty each year generally in September, which usually attracts more than 120 Irish Wolfhounds. The day before the event, what we call the "test of character" takes place - a circuit in which dogs and exhibitors interact in order to verify that the specimens shown are neither fearful, nor aggressive. If the dog passes the test, it is eligible to be reported in a table of notation , a system based upon show results.

R.A.L.I.E. preoccupies itself with health issues and has communicated technical information for several years on cardiomyopathy. Since our last National Specialty, an echo cardiologist veterinarian specialist has scanned some of the dogs present. The Board of Directors is studying at present the way to integrate this research into our table of notation mentioned above.

We are greatly obligated to our European neighbors, partly for the quality of our breeding stock, partly for the technical information, which have directed us to examine subjects like cardiomyopathy and liver-shunt.

To raise a breed as confidential and difficult as the Irish Wolfhound demands a rigorous collaboration of all countries. The problems that we encounter are perceptibly the same. Experiences of some are therefore relatively useful to others even if each country, according to its rules and customs, has its own way to respond to these experiences. It is

fundamentally important that we go in the same direction. Selection, in order to be useful, demands commitment and collaboration of all.

R.A.L.I.E. firmly believes in the importance of the European Federation, which must consecrate itself to exist and to be a place of exchange and meeting. The Federation must act in concert with all the European clubs.

We thank the Dutch club for its invitation and congratulate it for the excellent organization of this 2004 Congress. We are henceforth happy to invite you to Touquet, France in 2 years where French breeders will be anxiously anticipating your arrival.

We are looking forward to many participants. Please attend. You will not regret it!

Thank you for your attention.

Traduit par:

David R. Miller
a.k.a. Jean-David Laplanche