

Attachment I

President's Address to the EIWC CONGRESS 2012 Italy

It is indeed a great honour for me speaking to you here today as President of the European Federation..

I welcome you all to the 10th Congress and thank you for taking the time and trouble to be here at beautiful Lake Garda.

A very special thanks must go to our hosts, Marcello and his team for organising this great event. It is certainly filled with many interesting and important topics.

I would like to welcome the delegates from the many countries present here today.

I believe we have a lot of visitors from around the world attending this year, this is wonderful to know. It proves to me that the EIWC is on the right track. I believe that communication between Clubs worldwide is vital as exchanges of information will help us solve problems, especially on health issues, longevity, etc. A very special welcome to our visitors.

It has often been said to me that dogs shows are ruining our breed, that we are breeding for the show ring and ignoring health issues. This may be true in a few cases but I do believe that the vast majority of us try to breed with both health and the Standard in mind.

On the subject of health, it seems we do have a number of problems and while research is essential, and its importance cannot be overstated, it is a long term approach. While we are waiting for this research to achieve results, why not stop breeding from the affected dogs and work from clean lines only. Surely we are aiming for a genetically healthy dog, not a dog who may die at an early age and, worse still, may have been bred and and may have already passed on the problem to the next generation. If we value longevity, we must breed from genetically healthy animals.

We must remind ourselves that we almost lost our breed in the 1800s when Wolves were no longer a threat, and our land was in the grip of severe famine. I think the show ring played a big part in keeping the breed to the fore as our friends from the past had a shop window to display the improvements they were making as they tried to revive and strengthen the breed. Shows play the same part today, we can see each others lines progress as we strive for better dogs. So I think, overall the show ring has been a benefit.

Jim Behan.