

Our Dogs (UK)
Irish Wolfhound Breed Notes
(July 20, 2012)

During the week I received a letter from the Wolfhound community in Victoria, Australia with a plea for help with an extraordinary situation, together with a tear sheet from Dog News Australia. The article detailed the whole problem which stretches back over 5 years.

The situation stems from the misdeeds of a breeder, Mr. Barry Rochford. Apparently he was registering "paper litters" - ie, non-existent or mythical litters - and incorrect registrations for 5 litters. Dogs VIC, which I take to be the registering body for Victoria, had been contacted in 2007/2008 by concerned breeders who alleged that the given sire for two of these litters was not the sire and that the true sire was an unregistered dog of dubious parentage, probably not purebred. The owner of the dog supposed to have sired the litters stated that his dog had not mated the bitch in question and subsequent DNA tests proved this to be true. Eventually, the identity of the dog used was established. He was unregistered and his former owner wrote to Dogs VIC (Dog News has a copy of the letter) stating that he did not believe his dog to be a pure bred IW. DNA testing was inconclusive.

In two other cases, breeders had taken bitches to Mr. Rochford to be mated to dogs who turned out not to be the dogs they were supposed to have been.

Dog News investigations have revealed a letter written during this time by Mr. Bob Maver advising Dogs VIC that all dealings with Rochford should be investigated, that transfers should be stopped and the police advised about the probable theft of dogs by him. Rochford, who had been on the VCA disciplinary committee, resigned on 10/9/07 and investigations into these allegations was suspended at that time.

Rochford was subsequently sent to prison in 2009 after pleading guilty to four charges which included stealing two purebred IWs and killing one of them.

Puppies have been sold and bitches bred from the above mentioned litters. Litters were de-registered and then re-registered following legal action by owners of these puppies. The two litters by the unregistered dog are now at the heart of the current problem. Dogs VIC, in their wisdom, have decided to accept registrations for pups from subsequent matings but to leave the sire's name out of the pedigree and therefore his side of the pedigree will be blank.

A Dogs VIC member is now taking legal action against Dogs VIC for "failing to maintain the the purity of the pedigree register". However, if Dogs VIC de-register all progeny stemming from the two wrongly registered litters, owners of these dogs may take action against the organisation "to protect their financial investments in the dogs". Stud fees and loss of income from litters could be cited as grounds for this. A long standing Victorian member has told Dog News Australia that they would prefer to spend their membership fees fighting for the pedigree data base to be kept pure rather than on placating owners of puppies of unknown ancestry. They suggested a development register for these lines, as used in the formaton of new breeds.

Dog News Australia has learned that a member of Dogs Vic staff has put her job on the line by refusing to process the litter registrations which include blanks, on ethical grounds. Dog News Australia has sent a letter to the FCI asking for clarification as to whether they would accept such pedigrees.

The letter which accompanied the article asks for people's help as they feel that the whole breed is under threat in Victoria and the situation is spreading to other states with the sale of puppies. They feel that Australia will become a laughing stock, that overseas breeders will not want to send puppies or semen there and that overseas judges will think twice about accepting an appointment there.

I simply cannot believe the appalling behaviour of the Rochford person. Killing a dog? False registrations? I simply could not see the point of the "paper" registrations at first but, thinking about it, I suppose it was to create a plausible but mythical set of parents for subsequent dodgy litters.

However, I do think the idea of the development register seems the only logical solution at present. They ask that as many people as possible should make their feelings clear to the powers that be. With that in mind, please, if you feel strongly about this, email office@dogsvictoria.org.au and Peter Frost, President of Dogs Victoria and VP of ANKC FT@camhigh.vic.edu.au and Hugh Gent, President of ANKC, hughgent@bigpond.net.au

I certainly feel that the register should be kept pure, that registrations should have no blanks on them and that dogs should be loved family members, not investments. If anyone has any questions about this whole, sorry situation, please would they address these to Jane Rawnsley, Cillarda IWs cillarda05@gmail.com, Loretta Van Nunspeet, Drayton IWs, dogsdray@vic.australis.com.au and/or Lorraine Exley, Owai IWs, exley@clear.net.nz. The letter was also from Lorraine Benson, Sue Lewington, Sarah Baker and Kim Gunther.

I am sure that there was something else I should be putting in the notes this week but, apart from reporting that the Health Group held a meeting on Wednesday 11th, I can't think what it could have been! The above has rather taken over the old grey matter!

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PS to Ed. I have no compunction in naming this man and see no legal problems with it as it has all been published in Dog News Australia and he has been sent to prison. Hope you agree with this. M.