



## IRISH TERRIER CLUB OF AMERICA

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### Interim Report on the ITCA April 2000 Health Survey

by Ian MacDonald

On the Friday evening of the Montgomery Weekend, October 2000, about 90 ITCA members and guests attended a presentation by Dr. Slater of the preliminary analysis of the results from the ITCA Health Survey of Irish Terriers. She was impressed by the high response rate to the questionnaire resulting in information on a large number of dogs, and she concluded that the general health of the breed was good. Her talk stimulated much interest, and the discussion that followed resulted in specific requests for further analysis. This analysis is under way; but, unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond her control, Dr. Slater has not yet been able to complete the requested analysis. Due to the strict confidentiality of the original data, the analysis can only be done by Dr. Slater and her graduate students. It is anticipated, however, that it will be available for the next Newsletter. Rather than wait for all the analysis to be made available, it was felt that a general overview of aspects of the survey could be provided so that readers were aware that progress is being made. All results from the survey presented in this and future Newsletters are and will be taken from Dr. Slater's analyses and not directly from the original data.

In 2000, the Irish Terrier Club of America commissioned a survey to assess potential health problems in the breed. The survey was developed by Marianne Kehoe and David Brown (Chairs of the ITCA Health Committee) and Beth Devlin, D.V.M., together with Margaret Slater, D.V.M., Ph.D. of Texas A&M University, who, with some of her graduate students, distributed the questionnaires, collated the data, and performed the basic analysis.

The survey was divided into four parts: (1) General information on owners and Irish Terrier related activities; (2) Health History; (3) Breeders' Information; and (4) Follow up/ comments. The period covered by the study was the four years between April 1, 1996 and April 1, 2000. Participants were asked to provide information on all Irish Terriers that currently lived primarily with them or had been living with them at the time of their death during the survey period.

Questionnaires were sent out to all ITCA members, as well as to puppy homes of Irish Terrier breeders, to Australian Irish Terrier owners, and in response to requests from other Irish Terrier owners who had learned about the survey from the Internet. The initial mailing was in April 2000 with a post card reminder in June and a second mailing to non-respondents in July. About 65% of total responses were received within a month of the first mailing with about 15% more following each of the additional mailings. Although a total of 846 questionnaires were sent out, 73 were known to have either not reached their destination due to incomplete addresses or were sent to homes that no longer had Irish Terriers.

The number of respondents and dogs included in the survey are shown in Tables 1a and 1b.

	<b>Surveys Mailed</b>	<b>Responses (%)</b>
ITCA	375	277 (74%)
Non Members	398	326 (82%)
Total	773	603 (78%)

	<b>Alive at the End of the Survey Period</b>	<b>Died During the Survey Period</b>	<b>Total</b>
Males	416	91	507
Females	558	93	651
Total	974	184	1158

Most owners (nearly 96%) stated the number of years they had owned Irish Terriers. The length of time ranged from a few months to 64 years.

An additional point of interest is the variety of activities that Irish Terrier owners took part in (see Table 2). It should be noted that some respondents participated in more than one activity.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Number of Owners</b>
Pet/Companion	563
Conformation	166
Obedience	132
Agility	56
Canine Good Citizen	50
Therapy Dog	32
Other	61

Most of the respondents to this survey (87%) were willing to be contacted for further follow up questions from one or more of Dr. Slater, Dr. Devlin, or the co-chairs of the Health Committee.

Part 3 of the Health Survey was just for breeders; it concerned the collection of information on the breeding of Irish Terriers and questions relating to breeding and reproductive health concerns. 131 respondents completed this section. In addition to breeding related questions, the respondents were asked if they would be interested in attending a breeder seminar. Just over half (55%) said "yes"; 27% said "no" and the remainder did not respond.

It is very encouraging to the organizers of this Health Survey to know that the concept stimulated so much interest in the health of the Irish Terrier and resulted in so many Irish Terrier owners taking the time to complete and return the questionnaire. When one considers the total population of the breed, receiving data on over 1100 dogs is excellent. Both the organizers and the participants are to be congratulated. There are plans to highlight results in the next few issues of the Newsletter with the aim of helping us all get a clearer picture of the significance of the health of the Irish Terrier.