

BR 6- Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind **BREEDING POLICY**



Objective of policy

Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind has established this policy to provide information for the proper maintenance and renewal of the breeding stock colony which will supply a sustainable supply of pups to be trained as Guide Dogs and Assistance Dogs.

Governing Principles/Ethical considerations

Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind Breeding Code of Ethics

Legislation, regulation and guidance

- Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010
- International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) Breeding Standards
- Assistance Dog International (ADI)
- International Working Dog registration

Age range and mating of brood bitches

Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind will place potential bitches onto their Breeding Programme for a probationary period of six months. In the first instance, natural mating is preferred as circumstances allow. Bitches will only be mated having reached 18 months of age. Bitches will be only be mated after they have passed Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind Temperamental and Health Assessment Criteria. Most bitches will retire after their sixth birthday. Bitches will not have more than four litters. A bitch will not be mated once her cumulative total of pups added to the Programme reaches 25. There will be a waiting period of 12 months between each litter.

BR 6- Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind **BREEDING POLICY**



Housing and Care

All Breeding Dogs are housed with vetted and trained volunteers. All homes are checked prior to placement of each breeding dog. If a dog is to be kennelled, it is housed at Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind kennels or at a pre-approved private boarding kennels. If a dog is to be boarded temporarily with a volunteer family member this is on pre-approval from Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Breed stock selection/ Selecting suitable dogs for breeding

Dogs being selected to be part of Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's Breeding Programme are selected based on temperament and health. Potential breeding stock must meet Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's Breeding Criteria. Dogs will be accepted onto the Breeding Programme on a 6-month probation basis. On completion of the probation period and when age appropriate, the dog will become part of Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's Breeding Programme. The tests required to be carried out are:

- Behaviour Check List (BCL) Temperament Test
- C-BARQ temperament test
- Certified Ophthalmic Exam
- Xray screen to be scored by the British veterinary association or equivalent
- Gonioscopy - Golden Retrievers only
- Clinical Exam & Ultrasound of reproductive organs - Broods
- Clinical Exam & Fertility test - Studs
- Speculum Exam - Broods only
- Genetic Tests - EIC (Labradors only) / PRA (Labradors/ Golden Retrievers)
- Echocardiogram
- Blood screening
- Urinalysis
- Other required tests specific to breed.

BR 6- Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind **BREEDING POLICY**



Further, every dog approved for breeding will need to meet the minimum hip and elbow scores. Hip scores are not to exceed a total of 11 for Labs and 18 for Golden Retrievers; elbow scores should aim for a total of 0/0 for Labs and Golden Retrievers. All siblings of potential brood bitch/stud dog will also be tested for hip elbow score. All breeding dogs will also need to have an annual eye exam.

Use of external breeding stock

Dogs offered to Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind for breeding will be required to meet Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's Breeding Criteria. Puppies offered/purchased are required to meet Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's Breeding Criteria.

DNA Testing

As part of Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's Breeding Criteria genetic testing is carried out on each potential Breeding Dog. Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind currently test for Exercise Induced Collapse (EIC) and Progressive Retina Atrophy (PRA).

Breeding Procedures

Once age appropriate, the brood bitch is mated on her next season. Progesterone tests are conducted on day 7 of her season and continue until progesterone levels indicate she is ready for mating. The brood is brought to an Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind approved veterinary partner for Trans Cervical Insemination (TCI). Breeding decisions are done on a case by case basis and under veterinary supervision and expertise.

Four weeks post TCI, the brood has an ultrasound scan to confirm pregnancy. The Breeding Dog Volunteer will receive weekly check-ins by a member of the Dog Team

BR 6- Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind **BREEDING POLICY**



and continued support until the pups leave the nest at 7 weeks. TCI should be used to:

- 1) allow for genetic diversity; and
- 2) successful conception.

But TCI does not have to be used in every subsequent mating. If natural mating makes sense financially, ethically and practically then it should be considered.

In order to maintain genetic diversity within our breeding stock, Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind imports frozen semen from proven stud dogs from other schools.

Whelping Procedures

Brood bitches are whelped indoors in a pre-approved area of the home. The brood and litter remain indoors until they reach an appropriate age.

Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind is responsible for whelping each bitch. An experienced staff person will assist every whelp.

The Breeding Dog Volunteer contacts their local vet to ensure veterinary support, if required.

If a brood does not whelp with 24 hours of due date, she is brought to an Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind chosen veterinary partner to progress the next steps.

Whelping collars are placed on each puppy on day 2 and puppies are named. Puppies are checked daily and weighed each day for the 1st week. They are weighed weekly thereafter.

Any complications or health concerns in relation to the brood or litter will be raised with the Breeding Team immediately.

Litter Care

BR 6- Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind **BREEDING POLICY**



All litters born are socialised under Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's Early Socialisation Programme. Each puppy is monitored and health checked daily for any abnormalities. Puppies that die or are stillborn are brought to Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's veterinary partners for an autopsy. All puppies are recorded on Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's database system.

All puppies are microchipped and receive their 1st vaccine at 7 weeks of age, 2nd vaccine at 11 weeks of age and 3rd vaccine at 16 weeks of age.

Weaning Procedures

Puppies are weaned at 4 weeks, earlier if the litter is large or the brood requires support with feeding. Each puppy is fed an approved Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind diet and the required amount as per weight, age and breed.

Veterinary supervision

All breeding is carried out under Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind chosen veterinary partners and Pat O'Doherty, Gilabbey Veterinary Hospital, is Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's Breeding Programme primary vet. Sarah Mitchell, Southview Veterinary Hospital, is Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's Reproduction Specialist.

Post mortems

All sudden and unexplained death of breeding stock and/or puppies are required to have a post mortem carried out.

Data Recording and Evaluation

BR 6- Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind **BREEDING POLICY**



The following data is recorded on Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind database system by members of the Breeding Team.

- Identity and details of parents/pedigree
- Temperamental assessment of parents
- Forecast planning calendar for mating and whelping
- Mating and whelping history
- Frequency of mating and length of time
- Types and dates of mating – natural or artificial insemination
- Number and gender of puppies born
- Number and gender of puppies stillborn
- Number and gender of puppies that die in the nest, including dates
- Health, weight, vaccination and worming history
- Date of weaning
- Success of each puppy/litter
- Type, incidence and degree of inherited abnormalities.

Progeny Testing Programme

All progenies are assessed during their training and qualification to assess temperament suitability in regard to continuing a breeding line.

All breeding dogs attend a bi-annual veterinary check-up and an annual ophthalmic check by a registered ophthalmologist.

Management of frozen semen

Frozen semen importation and management is carried out by Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's chosen reproduction veterinary partners.

BR 6- Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind BREEDING POLICY



Euthanasia - End of life

The decision to end life is on the evaluation of veterinary expertise with Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's chosen veterinary partner.

Retirement of breed stock

BROOD BITCH

- Most bitches will retire by their 6th birthday
- After 4 litters
- That have required 2 caesareans
- Infertility – diagnosed under veterinary expertise
- Under veterinary advice

STUD DOGS

- At 7 years
- Infertility – diagnosed under veterinary expertise
- Under veterinary advice

Quality control & Compliance

Any animal welfare concerns or non-compliance reports are investigated by the Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind Breeding Team. If required, these are escalated to the Breeding Supervisor and the General Manager.

Monitoring and Evaluation

BR 6- Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind **BREEDING POLICY**



Dogs being assessed for breeding suitability undergo continued assessment during the first 12 months. Temperament Assessments are carried out at 4 & 6 months. Each potential breeding stock under goes a Behaviour Check List Temperament Test (BCL).

All litters progressing through Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's Training Programmes are under continued assessment by the Breeding Stock Assessment Team and Breeding Team.

Changes to the Policy

Any changes to the policy are by agreement with the Training and Development Sub-Committee and following approval by the Board of Directors.

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