

IRISH WOLFHOUND

A breed standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament and appearance including the correct colour of a breed and ensures that the breed is fit for function. Absolute soundness is essential. Breeders and judges should at all times be careful to avoid obvious conditions or exaggerations which would be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed. If a feature or quality is desirable it should only be present in the right measure. However, if a dog possesses a feature, characteristic or colour described as unacceptable, it must not be rewarded in the show ring.

Most recent changes to this Standard have an effective date of 03/01/2016

ORIGIN

Ireland.

UTILISATION

Up to the end of the 17th century, Irish Wolfhounds were used for hunting wolves and deer in Ireland. They were also used for hunting the wolves that infested large areas of Europe before the forests were cleared.



Illustration courtesy of NKU Picture Library

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

We know the continental Celts kept a Greyhound probably descended from the Greyhound first depicted in Egyptian paintings. Like their continental cousins, the Irish Celts were interested in breeding large Hounds. These large Irish Hounds could have had smooth or rough coats, but in later times, the rough coat predominated, possibly because of the Irish climate. The first written account of these dogs was by a Roman Consul 391 A.D.,

but they were already established in Ireland in the first century A.D. when Setanta changed his name to Cu-Chulainn (the Hound of Culann). Mention is made of the Uisneach (1st century) taking 150 Hounds with them in their flight to Scotland. Irish Hounds undoubtedly formed the basis of the Scottish Deerhound. Pairs of Irish Hounds were prized as gifts by the Royal houses of Europe, Scandinavia, and elsewhere from the Middle Ages to the 17th century. They were sent to England, Spain, France, Sweden, Denmark, Persia, India, and Poland. In the 15th century, each county in Ireland was required to keep 24 wolf-dogs to protect farmers' flocks from the ravages of wolves. The Cromwellian prohibition (1652) on the export of Wolfhounds helped preserve their number for a time, but the gradual disappearance of the wolf, and continued demand abroad, reduced their numbers almost to the point of extinction by the end of the 17th century. The revival of interest in the breed accompanied the growth of Irish nationalism in the late 19th century. The Irish Wolfhound became a living symbol of Irish culture and of the Celtic past. At this time, one determined enthusiast, Capt. G A Graham, set about obtaining some of the few remaining Hounds of the Wolfhound type that could still be found in Ireland, and with the use of Deerhound blood and the occasional outcross of Borzoi and Great Dane, he eventually achieved a type of dog that bred true in every generation. The results were ultimately accepted as a legitimate revival of the breed. The Irish Kennel Club scheduled a class for Irish Wolfhounds at their show in April 1879, and a club was formed in 1885. The Irish Wolfhound now enjoys, once again, something of the reputation that it had in the Middle Ages. Wolfhounds are now owned and bred in fairly large numbers outside of Ireland.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Irish Wolfhound should not be quite so heavy or massive as the Great Dane, but more so than the Deerhound, which, in general type, he should otherwise resemble. Of great size and commanding appearance, very muscular, strongly, though gracefully, built, movement easy and active; head and neck carried high; the tail carried with an upward sweep with a slight curve towards the extremity. Great size, including height at shoulder and proportionate length of body, is the desideratum [*ed. desired characteristics*] to be aimed at, and it is desired to firmly establish a race that shall average 81cm – 86cm (approx. 32" – 34") in dogs, showing the requisite power, activity, courage, and symmetry.

BEHAVIOUR / TEMPERAMENT

"Lambs at home, lions in the chase".

HEAD

Long and level, carried high; the frontal bones of the forehead very slightly raised with very little indentation between the eyes.

Cranial Region:

Skull: Not too broad.

Facial Region:

Muzzle: Long and moderately pointed.

Jaws and teeth: Scissor bite ideal, level acceptable.

Eyes:

Dark.

Ears:

Small, rose ears (Greyhound-like in carriage).

NECK

Rather long, very strong, and muscular; well-arched, without dewlap or loose skin about the throat.

BODY

Long, well ribbed-up.

Back: Rather long than short.

Loin: Slightly arched.

Croup: Great breadth across hips.

Chest: Very deep, moderately broad, breast wide.

Ribs: Well-sprung.

Underline and belly: Well drawn up.

TAIL

Long and slightly curved, of moderate thickness, and well-covered with hair.

LIMBS

Forequarters:

Shoulder: Muscular, giving breadth of chest, set sloping

Elbow: Well under, neither turned inwards nor outwards.

Forearm: Muscular, heavily boned, quite straight.

Hindquarters:

General appearance: Long and muscular.

Stifle (knee): Nicely bent.

Lower thigh: Well-muscled, long and strong.

Hock joint: Well let down and turning neither in nor out.

FEET

Moderately large and round, neither turned inward nor outwards. Toes, well-arched and closed. Nails, very strong and curved.

GAIT / MOVEMENT

Movement easy and active.

COAT

Hair rough and hard on body and legs; on head, especially wiry. Hair over eyes and beard especially wiry.

COLOUR

- The recognised colours are grey, brindle, red, black, pure white, fawn or any colour that appears in the Deerhound.

SIZE

Height at withers:

Desired height: averaging 81cm – 86cm (approx. 32" – 34").

Minimum height for males: 79cm (approx. 31").

Minimum height for females: 71cm (approx. 28").

Weight:

Males: 54.5kg.

Females: 40.5kg.

N.B. Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum. Only functionally and clinically healthy dogs, with breed typical conformation should be used for breeding.

FAULTS

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog, and on the dog's ability to perform its traditional work.

- Too light or too heavy a head.
- Too highly arched frontal bone.
- Crooked forelegs; weak pasterns.
- Weak hindquarters and a general want of muscle.
- Too short in body.
- Back sunken or hollow or quite straight.
- Large ears and hanging flat to the face.
- Twisted feet.
- Spreading toes.
- Short neck; full dewlap.
- Chest too narrow or too broad.
- Tail excessively curled.
- Nose of any colour other than black.
- Lips of any colour other than black.
- Very light eyes. Pink or liver-coloured eyelids

Disqualifying faults:

- Aggressive or overly shy.
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities.

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FCI Standard No 160: IRISH WOLFHOUND

FCI Classification: Group 10 – Sighthounds

Section 2. - Rough-haired Sighthounds.

Without Working Trial