

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 01/07/2026

ORIGIN

Ireland.

UTILISATION

Up to the end of the 17th century, Irish Wolfhounds were used for hunting wolves and deer in Ireland.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Irish Wolfhounds were already well established in Ireland in the first century A.D. The first written account of the breed appears in 391 AD. Irish Wolfhounds are mentioned throughout history intertwined with the great kings of Ireland. The first breed standard was written in 1885 and a breed club formed. In Dublin at the kennel club show in 1879 the first classes were given to the Irish Wolfhound.

The Irish Wolfhound is a living symbol of Irish culture and is one of the five official symbols of Ireland and has been granted heritage status by the Government of Ireland.



Illustration courtesy of NKU Picture Library

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The largest and tallest of the sighthounds is a rough coated hound of great size and commanding appearance, including height at shoulder and proportionate length of body, very strong and muscular though gracefully built. Easy and active movement, head and neck proudly carried, long tail and carried lower with a slight curve towards the extremity. A smaller, lighter, parallel type (so called "of sport") is in no way either accepted or compliant with the breed standard. It is desired to firmly establish a breed that shall have a minimum average height of 86 cm in the male, showing the required power, activity, courage and symmetry.

IMPORTANT PROPORTIONS

- A good length of leg is required, but the back should be longer than the height.
- The height at withers approximately equal the height at loins.
- Head: the distance from the tip of the nose to the stop should be at least equal to the distance between the stop and the occiput.

BEHAVIOUR / TEMPERAMENT

A Gentle kind loyal hound with a friendly nature towards people and other dogs. "A Lamb in the Home and Lion in the Chase". A loyal companion.

HEAD

Long and level, proudly carried; 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: Complete dentition, Scissor bite ideal, level acceptable.

Eyes:

Dark and oval.

Ears:

Small, rose ears set on high.

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 at extremity, of moderate thickness, and well-covered with hair, the tail should be carried low standing, and the tip of tail lower than the level of the back during movement.

LIMBS

Forequarters:

Shoulder: Muscular, giving breadth of chest, set sloping

Elbow: Well under, neither turned inwards nor outwards.

Forearm: Muscular, heavily boned, quite straight with slight spring of pastern.

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.

Hair:

Rough and hard on body, legs and head, hair over eyes and beard especially wiry.

Colour:

The only recognized colours are Grey, Brindle, Red, Black, Pure White, Fawn, and Wheaten.

White markings are only acceptable on fore-chest, toes, (not full foot) and tip of tail.

SIZE

Desired minimum height at withers:

males: 79cm (approx. 31").

females: 71cm (approx. 28").

Minimum weight expected:

Males: 54.5kg for 79cm of size.

Females: 40.5kg for 79cm of size.

This weight must increase proportionally with increasing size. This applies to mature hounds.

***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.
- Narrow under jaw, misplaced canine teeth.
- Straight shoulder and over angulation on the rear.
- Crooked forelegs; weak pasterns.
- Weak hindquarters and a general want of muscle.
- Lack of balance between the back and front.
- 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 or carried too high.
- 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