



# THE SOFT COATED WHEATEN TERRIER

Presented by the  
Judges Education Committee  
SCWTCA, Inc

*Produced and coordinated by  
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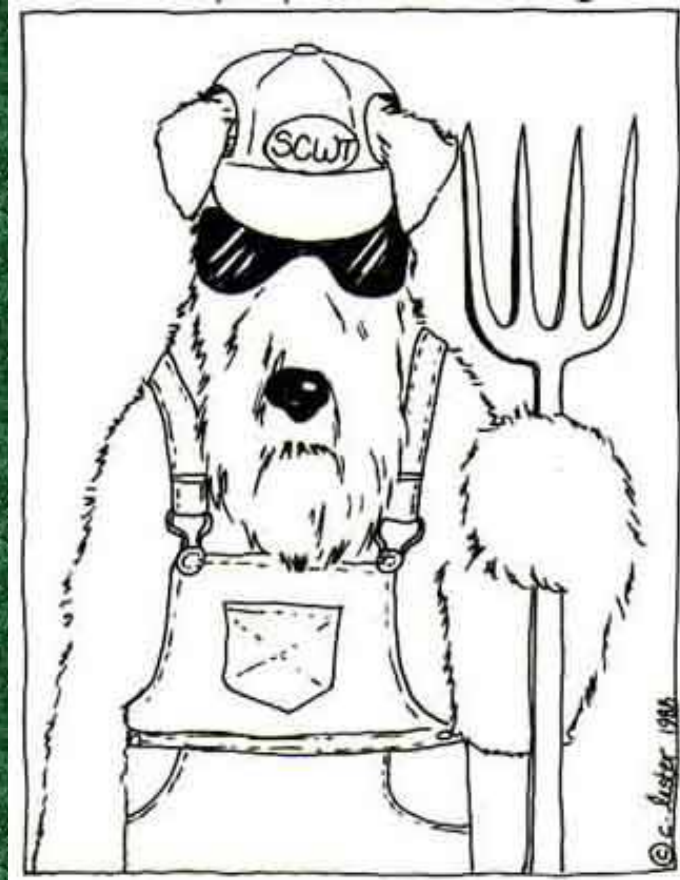
Detail from an early painting of a Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier



The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child  
F. Bacon - 1843



# FORM AND FUNCTION



The Wheaten, historically, has been described  
as an All Purpose Farm Dog!

# A Brief History



**The Wheaten was one of Ireland's early dogs that served as progenitors of Ireland's terriers.**

**They were small, hardy animals that kept houses and barns free of vermin and supplied the farmer's family with a steady supply of small game. Some were also used for menial kitchen tasks. They were tough little dogs and because of their harsh life, only the strongest survived.**



When discussing the origin of any breed, it may well be worth noting a quote from Anna Redlich. In her book,

*THE DOGS OF IRELAND*

she states:

*“...after all, are not the results of the evolution of a breed more important than its origin?”*



## Form Related to Function

*The words in bold face are actually used in the standard.*

**Hardy** – Whelp in barn, hedgerow or haystack.

**Particularly steady disposition** – Perform tasks as herder/guard dog, discriminate between friend and foe, eager to please.

**Medium size /compact, well coordinated** – Must not take up much room in small cottage, able to maneuver while catching vermin, hunting, herding and other tasks.

**Head moderately long, rectangular and powerful** – So as to balance its **powerful and strong muzzle** – Essential for the capture and holding of predators.

**Ears, small to medium, lying next to the cheek** – Valued, less risk when tearing through hedgerow or battling prey.

**Temperament, less aggressive** – Reflects his role as a general all-round farm dog.

**Gait, free and lively with good reach and drive** – As required of any good herding or hunting dog.

**Coat, soft and silky, single** – Appreciated for ease of maintenance.





## ESSENCE OF SCWT TYPE (Breed Character)

### - SILHOUETTE -

Square, medium-sized  
Tail set well up on back  
Neck ... Medium in length

### - COAT -

Soft, Silky, Waving, Flowing  
Warm Wheaten Color

### - HEAD -

Rectangular, moderately long,  
in proportion to body  
Ears ... Small to medium, level with skull,  
held close to head, point to ground

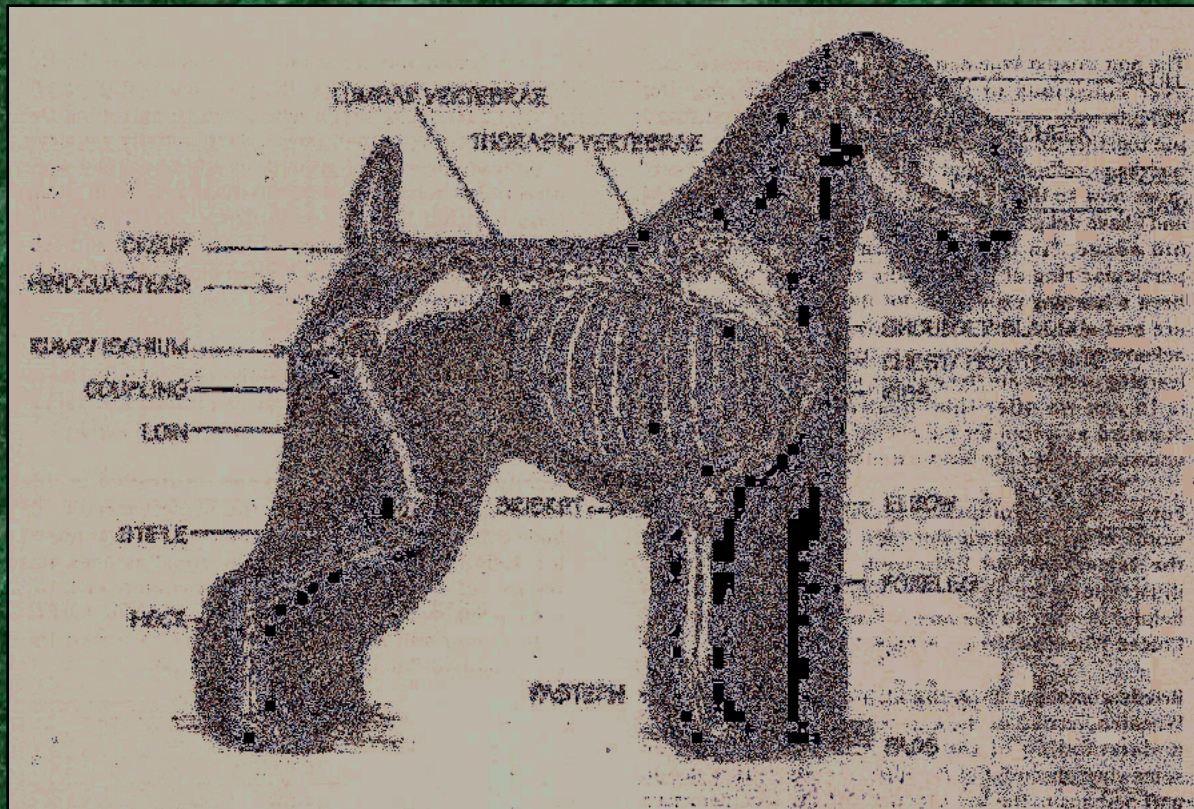


### - ATTITUDE -

Happy, steady, shows himself gaily



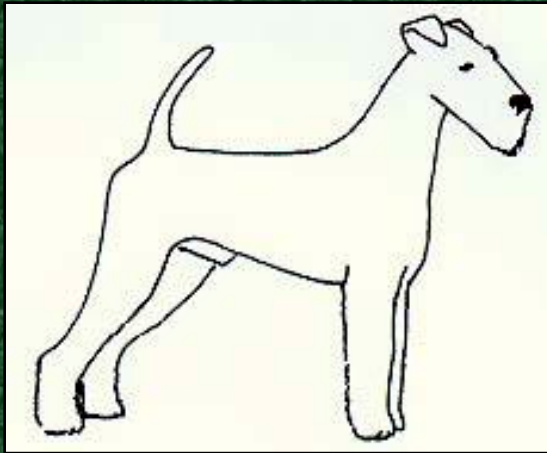
# Anatomical Points of the SCWT



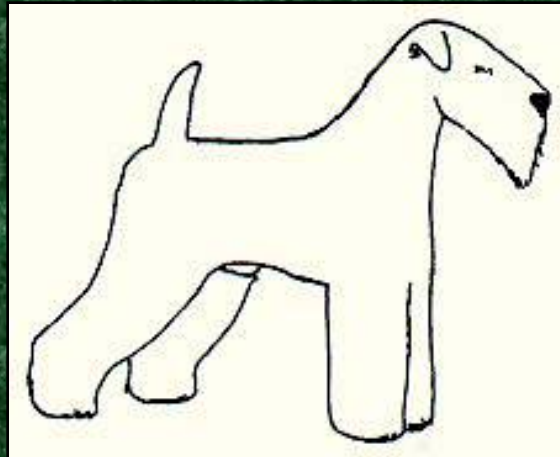
When the Wheaten's soft, silky, waving jacket is removed, you find little structural difference between the SCWT and most other long legged terriers. Note here the comparatively equal lengths of head, neck and back, giving the hallmark balance and moderation desired. Note equal length of upper arm to scapula with correct angulation. This, with properly angulated rear and well let down hocks, should provide the required "sporting" terrier movement.



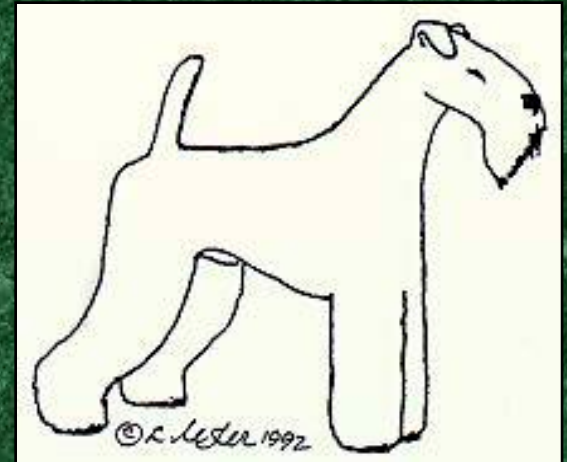
## COMPARING THE SILHOUETTE OF THE THREE LONG-LEGGED IRISH TERRIER BREEDS



Irish



Soft Coated Wheaten



Kerry Blue

Irish off square, Wheaten and Kerry square.

### What are the subtle differences?

- Body shape ... Irish more racy and less square. Wheaten more moderate, Kerry more extreme and refined in outline, primarily due to presentation.
- Ear set and carriage ... Irish & Kerry ears point to eye, higher set. Wheaten ear points to ground. Tip of ear should not reach below corner of eye.
- Head ... Not so refined on Wheaten. Trim on head ... Kerry underjaw is clipped, while Wheaten underjaw is trimmed to give rectangular appearance. More hair left on top skull of Wheaten.



# A comparison of the Wheaten and Kerry in Real Time!



Often the Kerry appears more exaggerated than the Wheaten.  
This is usually due to presentation (groom and trim).

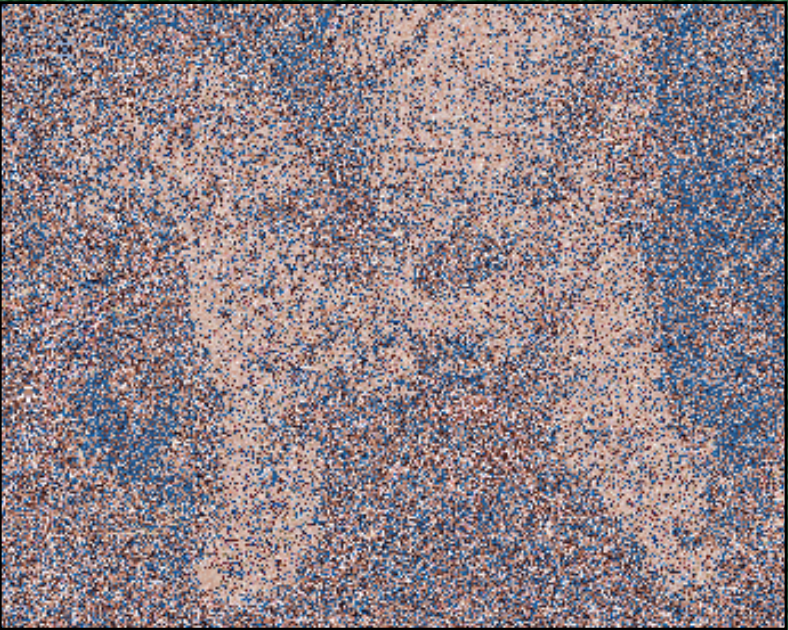


## SIZE AND SUBSTANCE

The dog on the right displays pleasing head to neck ratio but his tail is badly carried. Be cognizant of the role size plays in correct breed type. The dog on the left is oversized, coarse and too much dog to be considered correct.



Balanced bitch, up on leg, tight feet. Refined, as a bitch should be.



Coarse bitch, looking doggy. Feet questionable compared to bitch on left.



# Head



**Front view shows the manner in which the head trim/presentation creates a totally different look on these two similarly structured heads.**

**Generally the Kerry ear breaks slightly higher than the Wheaten ear.**

**The correctly made head will generally give the allusion of a muzzle longer than the skull.**

## About Head Planes

As with many terrier breeds of the same basic make and shape, the skull and foreface of the Wheaten Terrier should be on parallel planes and equal in length. Many are losing this.



Two bitches with correct head planes, good length and proper ratio of skull to foreface.



## HEAD COMPAIRISON ON TWO MALES

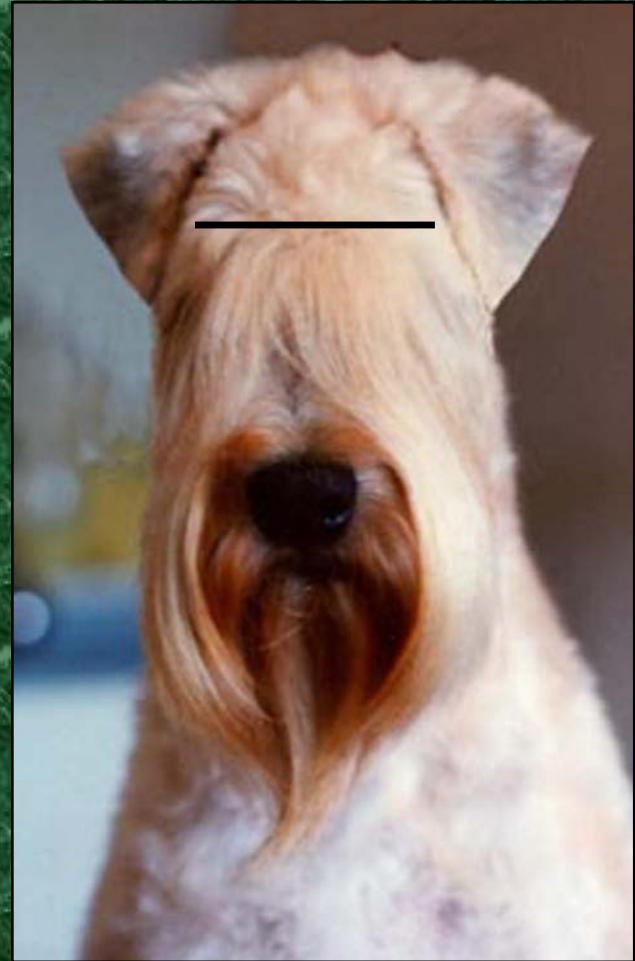


**Correct length, equal skull and foreface,  
Correct head planes.**



**Shortened muzzle. Pronounced stop with  
the back skull sloping back. Skull and  
foreface are not on the same plane.**

## CORRECT WIDTH OF SKULL



The breadth of a Wheaten's skull should be easily spanned by an average sized woman's hand. The lines shown across the skull are of equal length. The dog on left is too broad in skull.





**The ears on this dog are well placed on the skull and do not fall below the eye. Ear placement and carriage is what gives the Wheaten expression, since the eyes are only slightly exposed. Note that nose is large for size of dog, as per the standard.**



**These ears are also well placed and do not fall below the eye. But note how the hair is cut away from the eye. Eyes should only be indicated, never fully exposed.**



**Here we see ears that are drifting away from the skull. This is incorrect and spoils the dog's expression. We see these ears commonly in the ring.**



**Correct ear placement, carriage and expression on this bitch.**



**Hound ear, foreface longer than skull, giving a foreign look.**



**Ears appear more low set than they are because of excess hair on top skull.**



**Ears well set but too small.**



**Fold of ear is wrong causing ears to drift away from the head. In addition, there is no lift to ear.**



**Promising head on this young male.**



**Correct Ear**





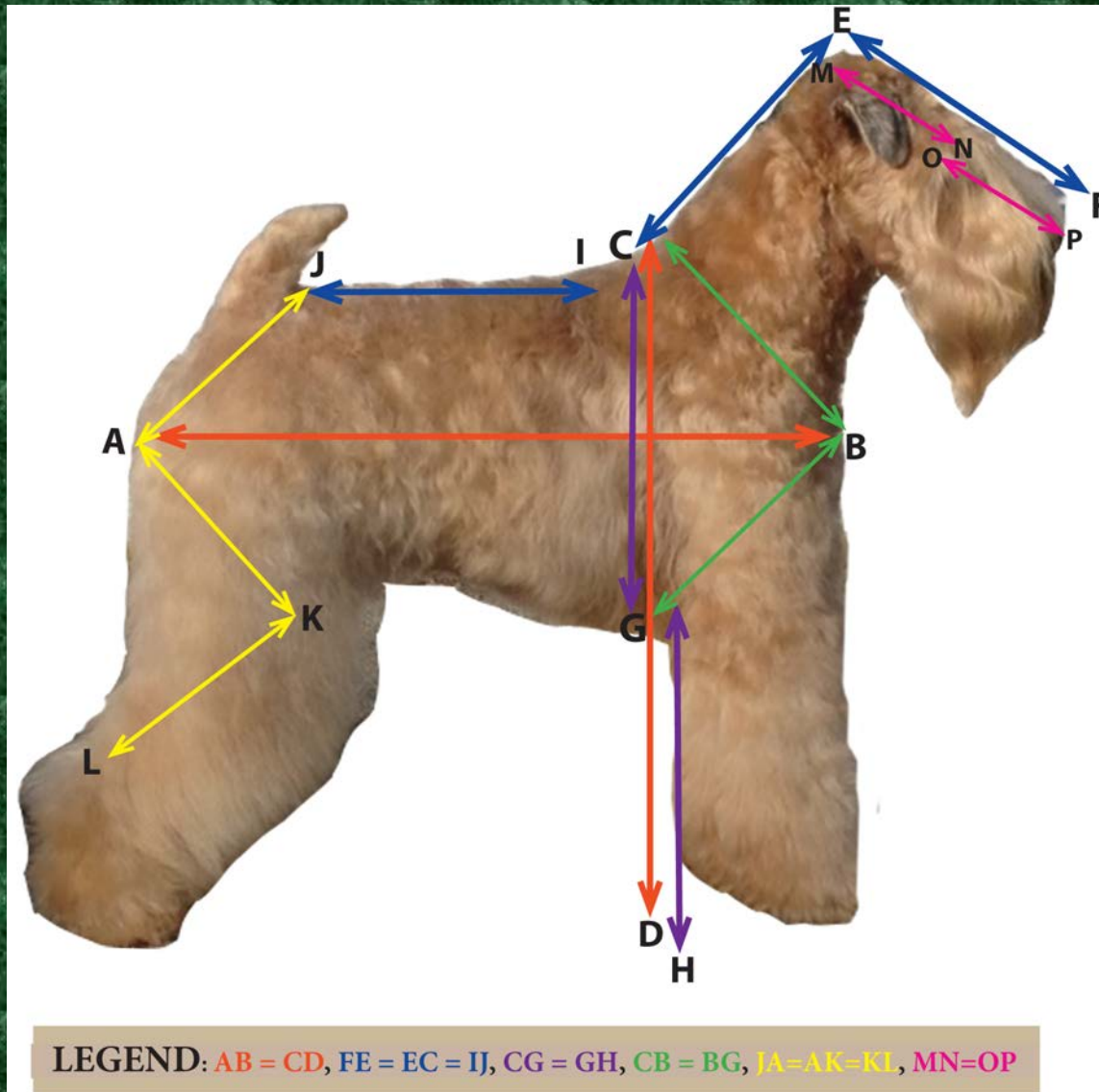
Pleasing shape to the eye but a complete lack of pigment surrounding it. Also note the off-black nose pigment compared to the dog on right.



Here we see correct eye shape and color. Note the nice "mascara" surrounding the eye. Black pigment is a necessity for correct breed type. Lack of strong black pigment should be faulted.

Note the correct large black nose.

# CORRECT MEASUREMENTS & ANGLES, FRONT AND REAR



Here you can see correct proportional measurements... like-colored lines are equal.



## FRONT, REAR AND BODY



Note build up of coat over withers, large, flat feet & misplaced tuck up on underline. Tail is set off end of back. As with many Wheatens, this dog lacks sufficient width to his thigh, which appears narrow and short.



This is a better balanced dog in every way. Feet appear small and tight. High set tail, he displays nice width to his thigh and a low hock.





Lacking sufficient hind quarter.  
Tight feet with good depth of pad,



Barrel ribbed & wide front.



Strong hind quarter with good  
width behind, low hocks.



Long hocks, slab-sided..



Strong rear, good body on  
this bitch.



Correct front.



# HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF NATURAL (UN-DOCKED) TAILS.

The upper row represents those that are acceptable.

Tails on the lower row are unacceptable.





# COAT



A distinguishing characteristic of the breed. A single coat, soft, and silky with a gentle wave and of a warm wheaten color.

The coat may vary in terms of amount of wave but must never be straight or frizzy/kinky, woolly, crisp or cottony and must not stand away from the body but fall in waves or loose curls so as to gently flow when the dog is in motion.



## COAT TEXTURE AND COLOR

Since coat texture and color, along with presentation, sometimes create a bit of a hang up with many judges, let's examine the following dogs together...



Coats on these two Wheatens are acceptable in both color and texture.



Soft, silky, gentle wave ... look for a shine to the coat  
Any shade of wheaten. Don't overlook quality in favor of depth of color.  
Depth of color should never be an issue.





## Comparison Study of Two SCWT Bitches



Both are very pleasing to the eye and have the correct silhouette. They are square, appear to be of proper size and are well balanced. Coat color is acceptable on both and coat length appears to be adequate.



However, note dullness of COAT. There is no apparent wave, which indicates the coat has either been blown dry, eliminating any trace of wave, or it is a COTTONY, PLUSH coat which STANDS AWAY from the body. This coat will BOUNCE rather than flow.

Here, we note a COAT that is obviously SILKY because it shines. We see the obligatory GENTLE WAVE. This coat maintains enough length to FLOW when the dog is in motion. It is an ideal Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier coat.



# Irish and American Coats

## Understanding The Differences

Many of the Irish coated dogs have beautiful coats, glistening like silk. Some have deeper waves in their coats than is the norm here in the US. This should not be misconstrued as “frizzy”, “fuzzy” or “kinky” all of which are considered major faults.



But there are often structural differences as well.

We often find coarse back skulls combined with narrow muzzles, and a deeper stop. Many have roached toplines and low tail sets. They may display little bend of stifle. Whereas they often have wonderful black pigment, coat color is often just this side of white. The dog on left is Irish coated and the dog on right is in show trim but not brushed out. Both are champions.



Here we have two seven month old pups, a bitch on the left and a dog on the right. These pups provide excellent examples of the difference in the full vs the “Irish” coat. This is what you will see in the earlier stages of a Wheaten’s show career.



This puppy bitch displays a full coat. Note the more profuse leg furnishings. Also note that tail is not set high, but rather off the end of her back, with no rear shelf.



This young male has a typical Irish coat which will blossom into a thing of beauty as he matures. Note more sparse leg furnishings.



The heavily waved coat on some imports is correct. It has a silky texture and lays flat to the body. The “frizzy” or “kinky” coat that stands away from the body and is dull to the eye is incorrect.



Very wavy coat, laying close to the body

Some imports and outcrosses sport an “open” coat, thinner than that most often seen in the ring here. Since the word “abundant” is open for interpretation, it becomes our call as to whether the dog in question is of such pleasing type that the thinner coat is acceptable. Additionally, many are quite light in color. White is not ok but often you will find a hint of color much like looking for the blue in a Kerry’s coat. So look for a hint of wheaten color.



Frizzy, kinky coat



Young Irish-coated dog



There is great latitude in what constitutes acceptable wheaten color. Generally, when artificially enhanced, the coat appears to be of a single shade, much like the Poodle coat, whereas the Wheaten coat in its natural state, appears variegated. Often young Wheatens display a deeper shade of Wheaten, bordering on red.

In the mature Wheaten, distinguishing between the Irish coat and the “American” coat becomes difficult for the novice judge. The dog on right is a young “American” coated dog. Dog below is a mature Irish coated dog.



As with many breeds of late, owing to the outlawing of tail docking in many European countries, you will see some undocked tails. Though our standard prefers the docked tail, a natural tail is allowed but must be carried at a 90° angle or with a slight curve forward. This tail is carried too far over the back.





Pleasing balance and proportions on this bitch. However, she has a frizzy, kinky stand away coat. It has been tipped a la Bichon.

The dog on the right is a prime example of the way grey shading can spill out over the head, neck and into the body. This is never condoned and should never, under any circumstance, be rewarded.

On the adolescent, we may find occasional black guard hairs sprinkled through the body coat. Although not preferred, they generally clear in the adult coat, and may be overlooked if the dog is otherwise of exemplary type.



This bitch displays a quality coat of correct length, pleasing color with beautiful waves. She, too, has lovely proportions, great tail set, correct ear-size and placement.





**Slight gray shading on ears and muzzle is acceptable as is no shading. However, the gray shading, in excess, spilling onto the head, down the neck or into the fall is not condoned.**



**The black muzzle on this puppy is excessive and chances that it will clear to a light shade of gray is doubtful.**



**Red shading on ear leather is rare in the US but is totally acceptable.**



**Above dog has no gray shading on ears or muzzle. The dog to the left displays an example of the slight gray shading found on ears and in beard.**





# Mature Irish Coated SCWTs



All are AKC Champions



# PROGRESSION OF A TYPICAL "IRISH" COAT



7 months



11 months



15 months



20 months



4 years



# COAT PROGRESSION ON A TYPICAL FULL COAT



**8 months**



**Older puppy coat**



**Adolescent**



**Changing to adult coat**



**Adult coat**



**4 years of age**

These photos show the various stages the full coat may go through. Puppy coat can be very straight and even slightly stand-away. This is not always the case however. Some pups have the obligatory shining, wavy coat from the very beginning. Reward it if the dog exhibits the correct make, shape and soundness. If the shine and waves are not visible on an adult coat, it is incorrect.



## MORE ON COAT PROGRESSION – SAME DOG



One Year Old



Three Years Old

The transition of puppy coat to adult coat can vary. The dog here displays a straighter coat at a year than the coat he developed at maturity. This is often the case. Coats, during the transition phase and in adolescence, can sometimes contain black guard hairs. But at maturity, the coat should be clearly Wheaten, silky and shiny.



## Comparison Study of Two SCWT Bitches “Make and Shape”



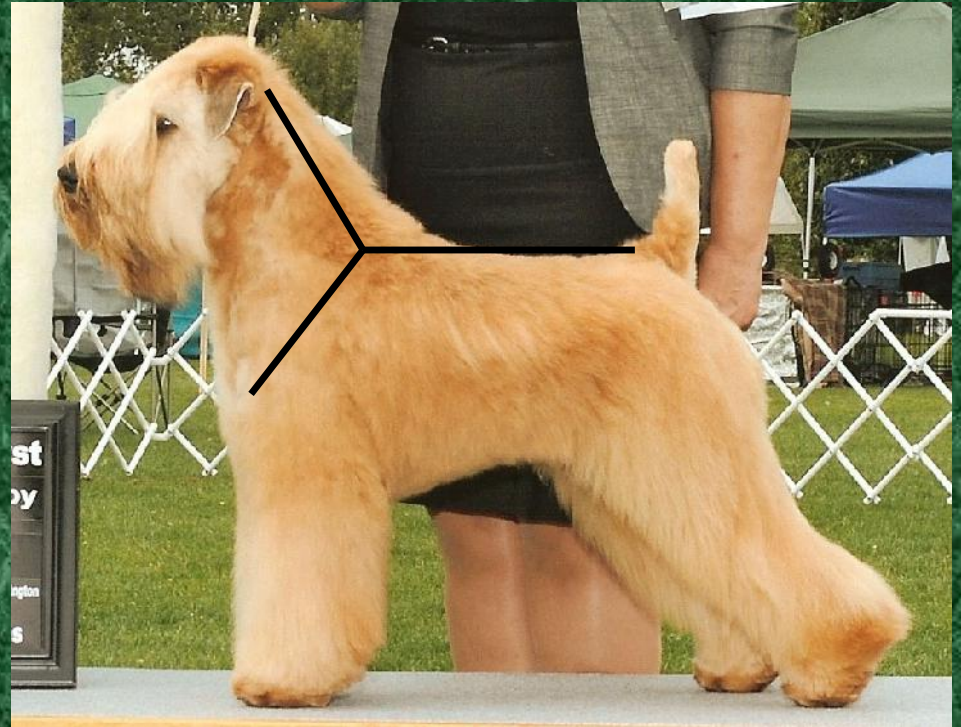
Now let's take a look at the HEADS on these two bitches. What are the differences? How about the ears? What about the necks? Eyes? BACK is level, TAIL well set on both bitches.



This HEAD appears slightly small and out of balance with the body. The NECK, made thick with this type coat, could be disguising a longer back and upright shoulder. The EAR is too large and set low on the skull. Notice where it is relative to the corner of the eye. Eye is over exposed.

Note that HEAD is in proper proportion to body, NECK is of medium length and blends smoothly into body. EAR size and placement is correct. It is small, held close to the head and points to the ground. It does not extend below the corner of the eye. Eye is only slightly exposed.





These photos show the way coat build-up over withers is used to disguise a longer back and an upright shoulder.



## More on Make and Shape



Neck is moderate and should appear to be the same length as the head. This dog is stuffy in the extreme.



“The Wheaten is a ... sporting terrier, square in outline.” This dog is longer than he is tall. Note low set ear and poor tail carriage.



Here is another attempt to create the look of a shorter back. Note the “tuck-up” is cut in forward of the loin with body coat left behind it so as to appear as leg furnishings.



This is a pleasing well-balanced Wheaten Terrier.





Tail well set up on back, shelf behind tail, lovely neck-to-back transition.



Nice head-to-neck ratio, nice ears, straight front and rear assembly.



A combination of faults seen frequently in the ring,



Low on leg, low-set ear, poor shoulder placement  
Straight front and rear.



## MOVEMENT



We look for movement typical of the sporting Terrier. This dog is exhibiting correct reach and drive. Note the degree of extension in his side gait. Also note how he holds his outline and balance.



## REACH AND DRIVE



This dog does not maintain an attractive outline and balance when gaiting. He is long cast and will have reach and drive for this reason and not because he is of the correct make and shape.



Here is a Wheaten bitch that displays correct reach and drive while displaying a correct make and shape. Her silhouette remains true.

WE DO NOT EXPECT NOR DO WE WANT “TRAD!”



# MOVEMENT: FRONT, SIDE, REAR



SAME DOG – SAME DAY

We would prefer that the topline remain level on the move.



# VIDEO SHOWING STRAIGHT FORWARD MOVEMENT WITH GOOD EXTENSION





# Let's look at these Wheatens together. What is good about them ... what is not?



Overall balance and coat are pleasing. Ear could be smaller and the dog himself is oversized.



This dog is oversized and coarse



Broad back skull, nice ear size, high in rear, lovely coat color and texture. Tail off end of back.



This coat is questionable. May be kinky, hard to tell. Lovely balance on this square bitch.





Length of beard takes away from overall picture. Abundance of hair over withers indicates dog is longer than he appears. Overstretched rear could indicate long second thigh. No shelf behind tail.



Over trimmed and too stylized. Note scooped out beard.



Irish coat. Dog is straight in stifle, and appears cow-hocked.



Well balanced Wheaten male.





Tail dropped. Ears too fancy. Beautiful coat.  
Tight feet.



Nice length of head. Pleasing ears. Upright shoulders,  
long and low.



Ear oversized, placement  
& carriage incorrect.



Head, ear size and placement good.  
Incorrectly carried natural tail.



European dog with correctly carried  
natural tail. Long and low on leg.





Tail slightly dropped. A bit longer than tall.



Head and neck not sufficient to balance with body. Ears oversized, low set.



Head square rather than rectangular. Head planes are not parallel with back skull sloping back. Upright shoulders. Top-line sloping. Ears oversized.



Pretty pup with correct ear set and carriage. Remember, color intensity is not necessary. We do not want to encourage artificial coloring of the Wheaten coat. This will lighten with age.





Note the difference in coat on these two dogs. One (left) appears silky with waves while the other (right) seems plushy and tipped. Both could be more square in outline. However, the dog on right appears slightly more square.



# WHEATENS ARE TERRIERS...SPAR THEM!!!



Do allow the Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier to show his Terrier spark!  
A note here...bitches often will not rise to the occasion when asked to spar.  
But the boys should be on their toes, as these two are, when asked to face off.



Well...that's all for now...



Good luck!

We look forward to having you as one of our gifted Wheaten Terrier judges!