



Official Standard for the Irish Water Spaniel

General Appearance: That of a smart, upstanding, strongly built moderate gundog bred for all types of shooting, especially for water-fowling. Great intelligence is combined with rugged endurance and a bold, dashing eagerness of temperament. Distinguishing characteristics are a topknot of long, loose curls and a body covered with a dense, crisply curled liver colored coat contrasted by a smooth face and a smooth "rat" tail.

Size, Proportion, Substance: Strongly built and well-boned, the Irish Water Spaniel is of medium length making it slightly rectangular in appearance. A well-balanced dog that should not appear leggy or coarse.

Size: Height: Dogs 22 to 24 inches (measured at the highest point of withers), Bitches 21 to 23 inches. Weight: Dogs 55 to 68 pounds, Bitches 45 to 58 pounds.

Head and Skull: The *head* is cleanly chiseled. The *skull* is large and high in dome with a prominent occiput and a gradual stop. The *muzzle* is long, deep and somewhat square in appearance with a strong underjaw. Lips are fine in texture, tight and dry. The nose is large and dark liver in color. The teeth are even with a scissor or level *bite*. Hair on the face is short and smooth except for a beard of long, loose curls growing at the back of the lower jaw which may continue up the side of the face as sideburns.

Topknot: A characteristic of the breed, the topknot consists of long, loose curls covering the skull and falling down over the top of the ears and occiput. The contrast between the smooth face and the topknot is evident in a well-defined peak between the eyes. The topknot, a breed characteristic, should not be trimmed in an exaggerated or excessive manner. **Eyes:** Set almost flush, the eyes are comparatively small and almond shaped with tight eyelids. The color is a warm tone of medium to dark brown, dark amber but never yellow. The expression is keenly alert, intelligent, direct and quizzical. **Ears:** Long, lobular, set low, hanging close to the head and abundantly covered with long loose curls of hair.

Neck, Topline, Body: **Neck:** The neck is long, arching, strong and muscular and is smoothly set into cleanly sloping shoulders. **Topline:** The rear is equal to or slightly higher than the front never descending or showing sag or roach. **Back:** Strong, broad and level. **Body:** Medium length. The ribs are carried well back and so well sprung behind the shoulders as to give a barrel shape. The chest is deep with a brisket extending to the elbows. The loin is short, wide, muscular, and deep so it does not give a tucked-up appearance.

Forequarters: The entire front gives the impression of strength without heaviness. The forechest should be moderate. Shoulders are sloping and moderately laid back, clean and powerful. The upper arms are approximately the length of the shoulder blades with clean elbows set close to the body. Forelegs are well boned, muscular and straight, set well under the withers.

Hindquarters: Sound hindquarters are of great importance to provide drive and power while swimming. They are as high as or slightly higher than the shoulders with powerful, muscular, well-developed thighs. The hips are wide. The croup is rounded and full with the tail set on low enough to give a rounded appearance. The stifles are moderately bent. Hocks are set low and moderately bent. Balance of front and rear angulation is important. **Feet:** Large, round, somewhat spreading. Well clothed with hair. Pads are thick. **Tail:** The "Rat Tail" is a striking characteristic of the breed and is strong, low set and carried level with the back and is not quite long enough to reach the point of the hock. The tail is thick at the root where it is covered for two to three inches



with short curls which stop abruptly. From that point the tail is covered with smooth hair and the tail tapers to a fine point.

Coat: Proper coat is of vital importance to protect the dog while working. The coat on the face is short and smooth framed by the distinctive topknot and ears of long, loose curls. The coat on the throat is smooth forming a V-shaped patch from the back of the lower jaw behind the beard to the breastbone. The remainder of the neck, body and base of the tail are covered with dense, tight, crisp curls. The remainder of the coat on the tail is short and smooth coated. Forelegs are covered down to the feet with curls or waves all around. The hind legs are also abundantly covered with curls or waves except that the hair is short and smooth on the front of the legs below the hocks. Feet are well clothed with hair. Dogs may be shown in natural coat or trimmed. However, no dog should be groomed or trimmed so excessively as to obscure the curl or texture of the coat.

Color: Rich liver to dark liver with a purplish tinge, sometimes called puce liver. No white hair or markings except for the graying of age.

Gait: Moves freely and soundly with balanced reach and drive. Should be true, precise and not slurring; may have a characteristic rolling motion accentuated by the barrel-shaped rib cage.

Temperament: Very alert, inquisitive and active. Stable in temperament with an endearing sense of humor. May be reserved with strangers but never aggressive or shy.

Faults: The foregoing description is that of the ideal adult Irish Water Spaniel in hard working condition. Any deviation from the above-described dog must be considered to the extent of the deviation, keeping in mind the importance of various features toward the basic original purpose of the breed, which is that of a gundog used for work in all types of shooting and particularly suited to water fowling in difficult marshy terrain.

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