



SOFT-COATED WHEATEN TERRIER CLUB OF GB

Are you thinking about getting a dog? If so you should consider the following...

The positive side of sharing your home and life with a dog, will largely depend upon your attitude. If you treat a dog firmly, but with kindness and respect, he will give you a lifetime of devotion. He will introduce you to many new friends as you go on your walks together. He will make getting up in the morning bearable because of the greeting he gives you, and you will never come home to an empty house. Even grooming him can be therapeutic at the end of a tiring day. The love and companionship of a well-trained dog is priceless.

However, having a dog is a lot of extra work, and a huge responsibility – it isn't easy!

- You must be prepared to put time and effort into training him from the day you take him home.
- Whatever the weather, and no matter how tired you feel, you must take him for walks at least twice a day.
- You must be able to turn a blind eye to the dirt he brings in.
- The doors and walls will get dirty at 'dog level' where he rubs against them.
- He will need regular grooming, which, if it is a Wheaten, is particularly intensive for the first two years.
- Whenever someone comes to the house he may bark, and if you have a Wheaten, he will engage in lots of leaps, whirls and other antics – not all visitors will like this.
- You can't do things on impulse which don't include the dog, e.g. stay overnight with friends after a dinner party because you have had too much to drink.
- You must get used to holidays in the UK so that he can go with you. That or overcome the guilt of putting him in kennels, not to mention the additional expense of kennelling him whilst you are away.
- Vet's fees can be a nightmare.
- You are taking on a responsibility that can last anything between 10-15 years, or more.

Is a Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier the dog for you?

Before deciding on a Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier, you must make certain that this is the right breed for you and your family. If he isn't, but you buy one anyway, you and the dog will be thoroughly unhappy. It is strongly recommended that you visit one of our Area Representatives who will own one or more adult Wheatens, meet them and their dogs, and talk to them about what it is like to live with the breed, and about the positives and negatives of Wheaten ownership. The Club have Area Representatives throughout the UK who you can visit. To find out who your nearest Area Representative is, please email puppy@wheaten.org.uk for contact details. Many Breeders will not consider you for a puppy unless you have made a visit to Area Rep first.

The Soft-Coated Wheaten terrier is a handsome, medium sized dog, whose coat does not shed. He is a fun-loving dog, intelligent and loyal. He is generally a good watchdog. He likes people and mixes happily with children. He mostly gets on with other dogs. Although he is a country dog, he is adaptable to city life. BUT, all of this does not make him everybody's ideal pet.

If you are looking for a dog that responds to your every command, then maybe a terrier of any breed is not the dog for you. Terriers have minds of their own!

If you want a dog who develops strong owner loyalty, maybe a Wheaten isn't for you. This breed tends to be an 'everybody' dog, relating well to the family, but also enjoys making new acquaintances.

If you prefer a dog who lies quietly in his basket waiting to be invited to do something, then perhaps a Wheaten isn't the dog for you. Wheatens are far more likely to do the inviting!

No one should consider a Wheaten unless they have the time and the patience to work intensively with a young puppy from the day they bring him home. Training must start straight away.

For the first 2 years, daily grooming sessions are essential to maintain his handsome appearance and to keep his beautiful coat in shining, mat-free condition. This also helps get him used to grooming and being handled. Only once the coat is fully matured to the full adult coat, at about 2 years of age, can the frequency of the grooming session be reduced to twice weekly, as a minimum. Though the timing of this adult coat stage does vary from dog to dog.

The Wheaten Personality

The Wheaten is a lively exuberant dog. If you don't enjoy being fussed by a dog, be forewarned – he jumps and kisses to express his affection, and not just to his immediate family, but for anyone welcomed into the family home. It never enters his head that a person may not like him, since he loves everyone. So, anyone who tries to ignore him may receive extra Wheaten attention, because he will think they just haven't noticed him yet.

The Wheaten is a people dog and cannot be left alone for long periods of time. He will get lonely and bored, and he will fret until you return. It is at this time that a dog can become destructive – Wheatens are no exception to this. He is at his best when he shares family life to the full, by being included in just about everything you do. He is adventurous and inquisitive, and a fenced garden is a necessity to ensure his safety.

A wheaten is less scrappy than many other terriers. He is a gregarious dog, enthusiastically seeking to play with all the other dogs he meets. He therefore needs careful and frequent socialisation with other friendly dogs to maintain his happy attitude.

In temperament, as well as other characteristics, there are variations within the breed. Some dogs are more volatile, others quieter. Some are more demonstrative, others more reserved. However, all are deeply capable of deep devotion to their family.

Training a Wheaten

The Wheaten needs careful rearing and socialisation. He can be extremely wilful and stubborn. Therefore gentle, but firm, consistent training is essential. As with other breeds, the Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier reflects the care and training he has received. Optimum temperament can only be achieved through gentle, regular human contact.

The Wheaten is a lively, quick witted dog, and consequently, quick to learn; but he has his fair share of terrier independence and can sometimes be obstinate. However, he is also anxious to please his owner and can be trained to a high standard **IF** the appropriate methods are used. If a command is given, it is essential that the owner insists it is obeyed. Otherwise problems could be in the making if the Wheaten thinks it's ok to do things sometimes and not others.

As the dog is a Pack animal by nature, he will defer to the pack leader who **MUST** be you. He must never gain the impression that he's in with a chance of usurping that position. Although with a dominant animal, this may not stop him trying.

Obedying the basic commands, such as Sit, Down, Come, Stay and Give, could prevent serious injury to your dog, and could, in some situations, save his life. It will also make him a more enjoyable companion to live with.

The necessity for immediate, early socialisation with people, other dogs and/or other animals, cannot be stressed enough. Puppy classes, obedience classes, taking the puppy everywhere you go, will all contribute to a well-balanced and well-adjusted pet, who is a delight to own. The dog who does not meet all and sundry at a young age, may well react with fear, or worse, aggression, to new situations.

Grooming

The Wheaten Terrier is eye-catching because of his soft flowing coat, which gently waves and shimmers in the sunlight. A well cared for coat is stunning!

Conversely, without regular grooming, the coat becomes dull and matted, and even smelly. Skin problems can develop, and the dog will be miserable, and could be in pain. He will certainly not be the beautiful dog you first fell in love with.

To keep the coat in a good and healthy condition, you must begin by grooming your puppy daily. He won't like it at first, and will put up a struggle, but you must persevere. You may think daily grooming isn't necessary, but by the time he is 6 or 7 months old, you'll be glad you did persevere, and you will find he actually doesn't mind being combed. At this time the puppy coat will start to change into the juvenile coat, and later at about 18 months to 2 years, the adult coat will come through. It is through these two stages that intensive grooming is required to remove old hair. This is the most difficult period as far as grooming is concerned.

Dog hair that does not shed onto the carpet or your clothes sounds too good to be true, and indeed there is a catch. The dead hair must be regularly combed out. If you leave the puppy without grooming, even for a couple of days, any tangles will have turned into mats and the next grooming session will be uncomfortable, if not painful for the puppy. He will begin to hate being groomed, resulting in a constant struggle for you and him, which neither of you will enjoy.

The other drawback of a long non-shedding coat, is the amount of dirt which can collect on the dog's feet, legs and undercarriage when out walking, and which is then trailed back into the house.

A non-shedding coat does not mean less housework - it does mean increased grooming!

Irish or English Coat?

Over the years, two distinguishable coat types have evolved in the Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier. These are the IRISH type, and the ENGLISH or HEAVY type. You may also hear people refer to the American coat, and this is another, even denser, heavy coat type.

The original 'Irish' coat (Ireland being the country of origin of the breed) is a soft, silky coat, which, on the adult Wheaten, falls in soft curls closely following the contours of the body. The hairs are fine and have a high sheen or gloss.

In England and the USA, a heavier coat has been developed, usually referred to as the 'English' or 'Heavy' coat. Again, the adult coat should have soft waves or curls, but it appears thicker, giving the dog an overall heavier appearance.

Some will argue that the 'English' coat rarely has the 'Irish' coat's sparkle!

New born puppies can look pretty much the same. Sometimes even the Breeder can't be certain at first, if a puppy will have an Irish or English coat when it matures. However, by about 8 weeks, when you take your new puppy home, they should have a good idea which coat type it will have.

The coat on the 'Irish' puppy is sparse and can be either fluffy or quite coarse in texture, giving the puppy a ragamuffin appearance. The puppies often have black ears and black masks as well, which grow out as the dog matures. The 'Irish' coat can take three or more years to mature to its full silky splendour. The leg coat in particular, takes time to develop in the immature dog.

The 'English' coated puppy has a more abundant coat and gives the appearance of a cuddly bear. The pups have black ears and masks, and occasionally dark markings. Any black on the body should have grown out by the time the dog is two years old, but some grey is usually retained on the ears and muzzle. The 'English' pup is quicker to gain the mature looking coat, although the final coat may take as long to achieve as that of the 'Irish' type.

The majority of puppies born in England are of the heavier coat type. Whilst a few breeders do breed pure Irish lines, they are being interbred, resulting in litters of mixed coat types. The breeder will be aware if there is a possibility of a mixed litter from the pedigrees of the parents. It should be remembered that the 'Irish' coated gene is dominant over the 'Heavy' coated recessive gene. Interbreeding of coat types, does not produce a 'midway' or 'in-between' coat. Some 'Irish' coats are sparser than others, and similarly some 'Heavy' coats are denser than others, but the adults can usually be identified as one type or the other.

It is advisable, if possible, to see adult Wheatens of both types before buying a puppy. Most dog books only feature the 'Heavy' coat type, but the Club's Expanded Breed Standard book has photographs of both coat types. Ask to see this if you visit an Area Rep, or better still buy one when you attend one of the Club events or from our Shop on the Club's website.

Dog or Bitch?

Many books will advise that a bitch is an easier companion than a dog, that may be true of some breeds, but with a Wheaten that may not always be the case. Whichever sex you choose with this breed, you should remember that you are getting a terrier, with terrier traits and characteristics to a greater or lesser extent. For example, some Wheatens will be prodigious cat chasers, whilst others will yawn at the very idea of such exertion! With Wheatens it really does seem to be dependant upon the individual dog, rather than its sex, as to how it will respond to its family and other dogs. Some bitches can appear more uppity compared to a more passive male.

The male can be as loving and affectionate a companion to its owner than a bitch. Both can be very lively. Some people would choose never to have a bitch, once they have had a male Wheaten, because they feel the male has more character.

Adolescent males (9-18 months) often become very aware of other male dogs and can see them as a challenge. Careful handling is required to see them through this stage, as with any teenage human. It is here that the benefits of training classes and extensive socialisation can be seen. Male dogs generally require more "doggy" knowledge to train, and therefore may not always be suitable for the first-time dog owner.

Either sex needs firm handling from puppyhood. Never assume that because you have a bitch, that she will be less wilful than her male counterpart. This is not the case in this breed. It will all depend upon the degree of dominance in the individual dog – a dominant bitch can be difficult to live with, and by comparison a submissive dog will be a joy by comparison – and vice versa.

You need to bear in mind your family and its requirements, as well as its capabilities, when choosing the sex of your Wheaten. The neutered animal of either sex is possibly easier to live with if you have young children

(Please take advise from your breeder on when is the right age to neuter, as this is often carried out at too young an age for this breed.) You can easily encounter difficulties with an in-season bitch if your children appear to suffer the congenital inability to close doors and gates behind them, as at the critical time of her season, the bitch will be anxious to be mated and will take any opportunity she can to escape to achieve her objective. Her seasons will happen, on average, every 6 months, irrespective of holidays, Christmas, family weddings, etc. Though not as often now as in the past, you may also find you are besieged by roaming males camping out on your doorstep, determined to get to your bitch by fair means or foul. Needless to say, none of these problems occur with a male.

Some books on general dog behaviour will suggest males will wander. Well so will the female if she gets the chance! The answer is to train your dog, regardless of its sex, from the day you take it home, so it knows it will only go out on its lead and with you, until you reach a place of safety where it can safely be let off lead to have a free run.

Wheatens are also would be Houdinis, so you need to ensure your garden is securely well fenced and escape proof.

Choosing whether to have a dog or bitch does, at the end of the day, come down to personal preference and circumstances. If you are buying a Wheaten as a family pet, it does not matter one iota whether it is male or female. As we have previously said, with Wheatens, the differences are usually down to the individual animal's personality and temperament, not its sex. Both male and female Wheatens make wonderful, loving companions.

So, you still want a Wheaten?

If you enjoy a lively, fun-loving dog and you are willing to devote time and energy into grooming and training, then the Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier could be the dog for you.

As there are not many Wheatens bred each year in the UK (average 350-400 per annum), it is possible that you may have to wait a few months before a puppy is available from a responsible and reputable breeder. It is rare to find a puppy available immediately – if you do, it might be advisable to ask yourself 'Why?'. The average price of a puppy is £1300 (@ January 2018). Though some breeders of top winning dogs may charge considerably more. If the price of a pup sounds unreasonable, you could refer to the Club Secretary for advice (secretary@wheaten.org.uk). However, at the end of the day, the amount you pay is a decision made between you and the breeder. If you feel the price is too high, other puppies will be available if you are prepared to wait a little longer.

Remember there is no substitute for a good relationship with a reputable and reliable breeder. When you are finally offered a puppy, be honest with your breeder about your circumstances. Make sure that the breeder knows about your home, family and living situation, and be frank about any worries you may have. A good breeder will ask you many questions, some of which may seem irrelevant to you. These questions are asked as the breeder wants to make sure you can provide a proper and safe home for one of their carefully reared puppies. Once you have made your circumstances clear, you need to trust the breeder to select the right puppy for you.

Most Wheaten breeders will be actively engaged in showing their dogs. If you want a show dog, it is essential that you obtain a puppy from such a breeder, though they will also be able to sell you the ideal pet too. If you intend to show, make sure the breeder is aware of this fact.

Once you take your puppy home, please do keep in contact with the breeder. They will be delighted to have news and photos from you about the pup, and right through its adult life too. Remember the breeder has put in a great deal of time and effort into breeding and rearing your puppy. The pups they breed will always have a part in their lives too.

When you take your puppy home, help him or her to settle in, and don't overtire them during their first few days. Everything will be strange to your pup now – he no longer has his mum or his brothers and sisters around him.

If you have children, please make sure they understand the puppy is a living animal with feelings. It is not a toy. They should be taught to respect the dog – don't let them wake him when he is sleeping, or constantly handle him when he is awake. If your children are young and boisterous and engage in a great deal of running and shrieking, this kind of activity can be confusing for any dog, let alone a puppy, and may arouse their over protective instincts. **It is unwise to leave young children of any age, unsupervised with a puppy or adult dog, for both of their sakes!**

You should be aware that problems could occur if two unrelated Wheatens of the same sex are kept together in the same household, although it has been successfully done. Two females, unless they are mother and daughter, or two males, do not always live amicably.

It is definitely not recommended to get two pups at the same time. Two puppies of the same age are impossible to train, resulting in two hooligans, and possibly two dogs vying for the 'top dog' spot. A first-time owner will have enough to manage learning to deal with just one puppy coat at a time, let alone two!

You should consider that a neutered pet of either gender is possibly easier to live with, although both sexes must be allowed to mature physically and mentally before being neutered. Neutering should not be carried out too soon. **It is also a myth that every bitch needs a litter – she does not!** If you intend your male dog to be used at stud with Wheaten bitches, you should consider showing him regularly at Open and Championship Shows to prove that he is a good example of the breed. Otherwise it is unlikely that his services will be called upon.

In conclusion.

In a suitable home, where discipline is gentle and consistent, where the dog knows his place, and where the dog is well-loved and treated as an important member of the family, the Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier is a delightful companion who will give you a lifetime of devotion.