

Breed presentation from Finland

FINLAND WAS THE FIRST NORDIC COUNTRY where Irish Soft-coated Wheaten Terriers were imported, back in 1963. The first litter was born two years later in 1965. The first imports were from Ireland and later also from England. In the late 80's there also was a rising influence from American dogs. The majority of the Wheatens in Finland today are from domestic heritage, or the offspring of imports mainly from Ireland, Germany, Sweden and Holland. The breed's popularity increased rapidly in the 70's and settled between 150 and 200 registrations a year during the 80's. The popularity has remained stable since those days. In the last 20 years there has been a total of 91 Finnish breeders.

THE FINNISH BREED CLUB Kerry- and Vehnäterrierikerho was founded in 1975. It is a joint club for Kerry Blue and Irish Soft-coated Wheaten Terrier owners and breeders. The number of members exceeds 1.100. The breed club hosts a web site, publishes a quarterly club magazine and a yearbook every second year. The club arranges breeder's seminars, annual special shows, temperament tests, grooming lessons etc. The owners are very active and many train agility or obedience with their Wheaten. The total number of show entries vary between 800 and 900 a year.

THE BREED CLUB HAS BEEN VERY OBSERVANT about breed-related health issues during the years. Inherited diseases have been resisted by health programs and breeding regulations since the 80's. These regulations were introduced mainly due to several cases of PNP (juvenile progressive nephropathy) in the early 80's. The PNP regulations include breeding restrictions for affected dogs and known carriers, and the club also pays autopsy costs for dogs that die with typical symptoms. The PNP program turned out to be very successful and the last known case of PNP was diagnosed in 1994. In recent years there has been a small number of protein losing and hereditary cataract cases and the regulations nowadays cover also these diseases, as

well as hip dysplasia. In recent years a recommendation for the inbreeding coefficient has also been introduced and is followed up yearly. Most breeders follow the club's regulations and none of the inherited diseases are considered to be a big problem in the breed today.

IN RECENT YEARS temperament-related issues have become more and more important, both for breeders and potential puppy buyers. The Wheaten Terrier is often living in a town area and has to deal with different aspects within the modern society. Fortunately, the state of the temperament of the breed is satisfactory. In the last questioner to club members (2003), 88 % of the owners were satisfied with the temperament and most of the breeders rated the temperament good or fair. The biggest problems appeared to be aggressivity and excessive shyness.

THE BREED TYPE has become more even since the first decades, and today the profuse/dull-coated specimens are getting quite rare, even though there is still a lot of work to be done to get the correct silky coat. Wheatens usually do well at the shows and are not seldom placed in the Terrier Group, some Finnish Wheatens have even won Best In Show at all breed shows during the years.

IN FINLAND the future of the breed seems to be stable. Among breeders there are still some old-timers that are continuing their work, in close cooperation with many new ones. But, as the gene pool is quite limited, the Finnish breeders also need to cooperate with breeders of other countries. Therefore, it is extremely important that breeders get together and share experiences for the common goal: the healthy, typical Wheaten Terrier with a good temperament. The Finnish Kerry- ja vehnäterrierikerho wishes to address thanks to the Swedish Wheaten Terrier Club for arranging this seminar.



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