

# *Congratulations on Your New*

# Irish Water Spaniel

The Irish Water Spaniel Club of America (IWSCA) thanks you for registering your puppy with the AKC and supporting responsible breeders and pet owners. We have great respect for and confidence in our breeders and encourage you to build an ongoing relationship with them and other IWSCA members; people dedicated to helping you and your dog form a rewarding, lifelong partnership. To start you off, we want to provide some of the breed's history and other helpful information about your new pet.

## History

The Irish Water Spaniel (IWS) descends from a water spaniel of ancient lineage dating back as far as the Roman Era and even earning a mention in a Shakespearean play. In the 1860s, Dublin sportsman, Justin McCarthy, was instrumental in developing the distinct Irish Water Spaniel breed-type. His celebrated dog, "Boatswain," was one of the first pure-type Irish Water Spaniels shown in Ireland. IWS popularity soared and by 1875, the Irish Water Spaniel was the third most popular sporting dog in the United States and one of the original nine breeds recognized by the AKC in 1884.



## General Appearance

Irish Water Spaniels are a smart, upstanding, strongly built dog that combines great intelligence and rugged endurance with a bold, dashing temperament. IWS have immediately identifiable, unforgettable characteristics which make a truly unique dog - a top-knot of long loose curls; a beard growing at the base of their throats, curly liver brown coats of longish ringlets of hair; naturally clean-shaven throats and muzzles; and a smooth "rat tail" completely free of curls except at the base.

## Temperament and Personality

In Irish mythology it's said that Princess Paen wanted to teach a leprechaun a lesson and put him inside an Irish Water Spaniel pup for a year. When it came time for the leprechaun's release, he promised a bit of him would remain forever in the dog and its descendants.



IWS are very alert, inquisitive and active with an endearing sense of humor. However, an IWS may be reserved with strangers but, should never be aggressive or shy. The IWS is not a breed that can be forgotten in the backyard. They excel as close members of an active family. If kept in a yard or kennel, they need a significant amount of daily family-time to stay emotionally healthy. Like all breeds, to develop appropriate social behaviors, it's important to provide your Irish Water Spaniel with early and continuing socialization and training. This is essential if they live with small children. To bring out the best in your IWS, we recommend positive, motivational training methods (food, toys, praise) rather than a heavy-handed disciplinary approach.

## Obedience, Performance and Activities

The first Sporting dog to obtain an AKC obedience title was an IWS. Over the years, the breed has produced several Obedience Trial Champions. IWS excel in freestyle, rally, agility, dock diving, tracking, flyball and as Therapy and Assistance Dogs.



## Field/Hunting Dogs

The Irish Water Spaniel is often considered a dual-purpose hunting dog, as the breed will retrieve upland game as well as waterfowl. Their dense coat protects the dog in the coldest water, but at the end of the day, some grooming may be necessary to remove the cockleburs and seeds picked up in the field. The excellent vision and marking abilities of the IWS, combined with a keen nose, protective coat, soft mouth, and tenacious attitude, make them truly wonderful hunting companions. In AKC fieldwork, IWS may compete in retriever and spaniel events.



## Watchdogs

The Irish Water Spaniel was not bred to be a watchdog. They are, however, devoted one family dogs who tend to be protective of themselves and their people. They are not excessive “sport” barkers, but will let you know if there’s a stranger about.

## Routine Care

The Irish Water Spaniel is a breed that requires grooming and care to prevent mats from forming and to maintain healthy coat, ears, teeth and nails. They should be thoroughly brushed every one to two weeks and bathed monthly. The coat may be cut short for ease of care. Short coats are even allowed in the show ring if not so short as to obscure the curl. To prevent ear infections, routine care is essential, especially after swimming. Consult your breeder.

Contrary to popular myth, IWS do shed. However, their coat sheds far less than most breeds. Though no dog is “hypoallergenic,” there are numerous reports of people allergic to dogs living comfortably with an IWS.

To protect your pet in the event they are lost, we strongly recommend that in addition to their collar and tags, you permanently identified your IWS with a microchip or tattoo. Permanent identifiers can be registered with the AKC Companion Animal Recovery (CAR), a 24-hour toll-free hotline. For information, visit [www.akccar.org](http://www.akccar.org) or call 800-252-7894.

## Health and Longevity

IWS breeders screen for health issues in order to produce healthier dogs. The average life span ranges from 9 to 12 years, with a few reaching 15 years old. Principal health concerns are tumors, seizures, allergies, hip and elbow dysplasia, and thyroid disease. IWS have shown sensitivity to Sulfa antibiotics and the worming medication Ivermectin. Consult with your breeder and inform your veterinarian.

## Breeding

The breeding of dogs is a serious responsibility. The Irish Water Spaniel Club of America recommends that you spay or neuter your IWS if, in consultation with your breeder, your dog has not been selected for breeding. Neutering may eliminate problems caused by heat cycles in females, and territory marking and roaming by males. However, recent studies indicate benefits to delaying until the dog is fully mature. Please consult with your breeder when deciding the right time to spay or neuter your pet.

AKC permits spayed and neutered dogs to participate in all phases of obedience, tracking, rally, agility and field competitions. However, only animals capable of reproducing may be exhibited in conformation shows.

## Irish Water Spaniel Club of America

The IWSCA is a member club of the AKC and the national parent club for the Irish Water Spaniel. We exist to preserve and protect this old and rare breed and to provide tools, guidance and education to owners and breeders of the dog that has been called “the best kept secret of the dog world.”

Among IWSCA’s objectives are to do everything possible to promote the natural abilities and qualities of the Irish Water Spaniel and to further the use of the IWS as a hunting dog and family companion.

IWSCA Members receive our official club newsletter, “Rat Tails” and members-only access to our helpful website.

Irish Water Spaniel Club of America: <http://iwsca.org/>.

We invite you to become a member of a world-wide family.

*Join  
IWSCA  
today!*

