



West Highland White Terrier

The breed standard outlines the ideal characteristics, temperament, and appearance of a breed, and ensures that a dog can carry out its original purpose. Breeders and judges should be mindful to prioritize dogs that are healthy and sound in both mind and body.

Origin and Purpose

The “Westie” or “Highlander”, as he is sometimes called, is a smallish dog stemming from the basic branch of the Terrier family. He has great agility and is quick in movement with tremendous stamina and courage, attributes which he needed as a hunter of fox and otter in his native Scotland, where rocks and crags and generally rough terrain made ease and quickness of movement vital. By selection and inter-breeding, the white colour was purposely bred so that the dog could be easily distinguished from his foe during the hunt, while his double coat gave necessary protection against the teeth of his foe and the climate. The West Highlander is not an argumentative terrier but is a plucky individual who will not back down and who will stand against a larger animal in matters of moral rights; yet he is fun-loving and a devoted companion.

General Appearance

The West Highland White Terrier is that of a small, game, well-balanced, hardy-looking Terrier exhibiting good showmanship, possessed of no small amount of self-esteem, strongly built, deep in chest and back ribs, straight back and powerful hindquarters on muscular legs, and exhibiting in marked degree a great combination of strength and activity. The coat should be about 5 cm (2 in) long, white in colour, hard, with plenty of soft undercoat. The dog should be neatly presented. The ruff of hair around the head should act as a frame for the face to yield a typical Westie expression.

Temperament

Must be alert, gay, courageous, self-reliant, and friendly.

Faults: Excess timidity or excess pugnacity.

Size

Dogs should measure 28 cm (11in) at the withers, bitches 3 cm (1 in) less.

Faults: Any specimens as much as 3 cm (1 in) over or under the height standard are very objectionable.

Coat and Colour

Coat, very important, and seldom seen to perfection, must be double-coated. The outer coat consists of straight, hard hair, at least 5 cm (2 in) long on the body of mature dogs, with proper blending of the shorter coat on neck and shoulders. Faults: Any silkiness or tendency to curl is a serious fault, as in an open or single coat. Colour and Pigmentation: Coat must be white, as defined by the breed's name. Nose must be black. Black pigmentation is most desirable on lips, eye rims, pads of feet, nails and skin. **Faults:** Any coat colour other than white, and nose colour other than black are serious faults.

Head

Skull should be fairly broad, being in proportion to the powerful jaw, not too long, slightly domed, and gradually tapering to the eyes. There should be a defined stop, eyebrows heavy.

Faults: A too long or too narrow skull.



Muzzle should be slightly shorter than the skull, powerful, and gradually tapering to the nose, which should be large. The **jaws** should be level and powerful, the teeth well set and large for the size of the dog. There shall be six incisor teeth between the canines of both lower and upper jaws. A tight scissors bite with upper incisors slightly overlapping the lower incisors or level mouth are equally acceptable. **Faults:** Muzzle longer than skull. Teeth much undershot are a serious fault as are teeth defective or missing.

Eyes widely set apart, medium in size, dark in colour, slightly sunk in the head, sharp and intelligent. Looking from under heavy eyebrows, they give a piercing look. **Faults:** Too small, too full or light-coloured eyes are very objectionable.

Ears small, carried tightly erect, set wide apart and terminating in a sharp point. They must never be cropped. The hair on the ears should be short, smooth and velvety. Ears should be free of fringe at the tips. **Faults:** Round-pointed, drop, broad and large ears are very objectionable, as are mule-ears, ears are set too closely together or not held tightly erect.

Neck

Should be sufficiently long to allow the proper set-on of head required, muscular and gradually thickening towards the base, allowing the neck to merge into nicely sloping shoulders.

Faults: Short neck or too long neck, thus upsetting the overall balance.

Forequarters

Forelegs should be muscular and relatively short, but with sufficient length to set the dog up so as not to be too close to the ground. Height from the highest point of the withers to the ground should be approximately equal to the length from the withers to set-on of tail; height from elbow to withers and elbow to the ground should be approximately equal. The shoulder blades should be well laid back and well knit at the backbone. The chest should be relatively broad and the front legs spaced apart accordingly. The front legs should be set in under the shoulder blades with definite body overhang before them, and should be reasonably straight and covered with short, hard hair. The forefeet are larger than the hind ones, are round, proportionate in size, and strong; thickly padded, and covered with short, hard hair; they may properly be turned out a slight amount. **Faults:** Steep shoulders, loaded shoulders, or out at the elbows. Too light bone. A “fiddle front” is a serious fault.

Chest and Body

Chest very deep and extending at least to the elbows with breadth in proportion to the size of the dog. Body compact and of good substance, level back, ribs deep, and well arched in the upper half of rib, presenting a flattish side appearance; loins broad and strong, hindquarters strong, muscular, and wide across the top. **Faults:** Shallow chest, long or weak back, barrel ribs, high rump.

Hindquarters

Should be muscular, the hind legs relatively short and sinewy, the thighs very muscular, well angulated, and not set wide apart. The hocks well bent and parallel viewed from the rear. The hind feet are smaller than the forefeet, and thickly padded. **Faults:** Too light in bone, cow-hocks, weak hocks, lack of angulation.



Tail

Relatively short, when standing erect it should be approximately level with the top of the skull, thus maintaining a balanced appearance. It should be covered with hard hairs, no feather, as straight as possible, carried gaily but not curled over the back. The tail should be set on high enough so that the spine does not slope down to it. The tail must never be docked. **Faults:** Tail-set too low; tail too long or carried at half mast or over back.

Gait

Should be free, straight and easy all around. In front, the leg should be freely extended forward by the shoulder. The hind movement should be drawn close under the body so that when moving off the foot is thrown or pushed forward with some force. **Faults:** Stiff, stilted or too wide movement behind. Lack of reach in front, and/or drive behind.

Summary of Faults

Any departure from the aforementioned ideals shall be considered faulty to the degree in which it interferes with the health and well-being of the dog and the breed's purpose.

- excess timidity or excess pugnacity,
- any specimens as much as 3 cm (1 in) over or under height standard;
- silky or curling coat, open or single coat;
- any coat colour other than white, or nose colour other than black;
- skull too long or too narrow;
- muzzle longer than skull;
- undershot or overshot bite, missing or defective teeth;
- eyes too small, too full or light-coloured;
- ears round-pointed, drop, broad and large, mule-ears, ears set too close, or not held tightly erect;
- neck too short or too long;
- steep shoulders, loaded shoulders out at elbows, too light bone in forelegs, fiddle-front;
- shallow chest;
- long or weak back, barrel ribs, high rump;
- cow-hocks, weak hocks, too light bone in hind legs, lack of angulation;
- tail set too low, tail too long, carried at half-mast or over back;
- stiff stilted movement, too wide movement behind, lack of reach in front and/or drive behind

Breed Name: West Highland White Terrier

Year of Recognition: 1903

Effective Date: January 2004