

The wording for the Standard appears in *italics*.

*General Appearance: Of great size and commanding appearance, the Irish Wolfhound is remarkable in combining power and swiftness with keen sight. The largest and tallest of the galloping hounds, in general type he is a rough coated, Greyhoundlike breed; very muscular; strong through gracefully built; movements easy and active; head and neck carried high, tail carried with an upward sweep with a slight curve towards the extremity. The minimum height and weight of dogs should be 32 inches and 120 pounds; of bitches, 30 inches and 105 pounds; these apply only to hounds over 18 months of age. Anything below this should be debarred from competition. Great size, including height at shoulder and proportionate length of body, is the desideratum to be aimed at, and it is desired to firmly establish a race that shall average from 32 to 34 inches in dogs, showing the requisite power; activity, courage and symmetry.*

Although great size, including height at the shoulder and proportionate length of body is to be desired, it is not to come at the expense of balance and symmetry. Some judges equate great size with height alone and reward tall, finely boned and narrow bodied animals, but height is only one component in great size.

Great size should be synonymous with the substance and power necessary in a dog that is to hunt large and formidable prey, and this size does not come from bulk weight nor mere inches at the shoulder, but from great depth of body, spring of rib, strong muscular structure and good bone.

The Irish Wolfhound is longer than he is tall. The proportions of all of the early dogs seem to show a beautiful symmetry being slightly longer than the height at the withers.



“A giant, rough-coated Greyhound-like breed”

Type calls for a rough-coated Greyhound-like breed; very muscular, strong though gracefully built, showing the requisite power, activity, courage and symmetry. Understanding the balance of power and swiftness in the Irish Wolfhound is necessary if one is to evaluate the breed. The Irish Wolfhound should not be Mastiff-like nor should it have a Deerhound appearance. It should never suggest frailty or weakness. The breed should exude strength and power with commanding appearance and still maintain the graceful Greyhound-like image. It is important to remember the original purpose of the Irish Wolfhound as a powerful hunter of big game.

In order to have the "commanding appearance" called for by the Standard, an Irish Wolfhound should have an intelligent expression and imposing bearing. The old coat of arms "gentle when stroked, fierce when provoked" typifies the range of expression.

The Irish Wolfhound should not move wide in front or rear but rather converge or single track. The stride is long and smooth with great reach and a strong, powerful drive. The Standard's reference to "movements easy and active" describes a sound and effortless gait.

*HEAD - Long, the frontal bones of the forehead very slightly raised and very little indentation between the eyes. Skull not too broad. Muzzle, long and moderately pointed. Ears, small and Greyhound-like in carriage. Faults listed: too light or heavy a head, too highly arched frontal bone; large ears and hanging flat to the face.*

As a hunter of large and fierce prey, the Irish Wolfhound needs jaws of sufficient length and strength to cope with his quarry when he overtakes it. He is an "in and out" fighter, a slasher in battle. He needs plenty of muzzle before his eyes. Any tendency to a weak or snipey muzzle is a serious fault.



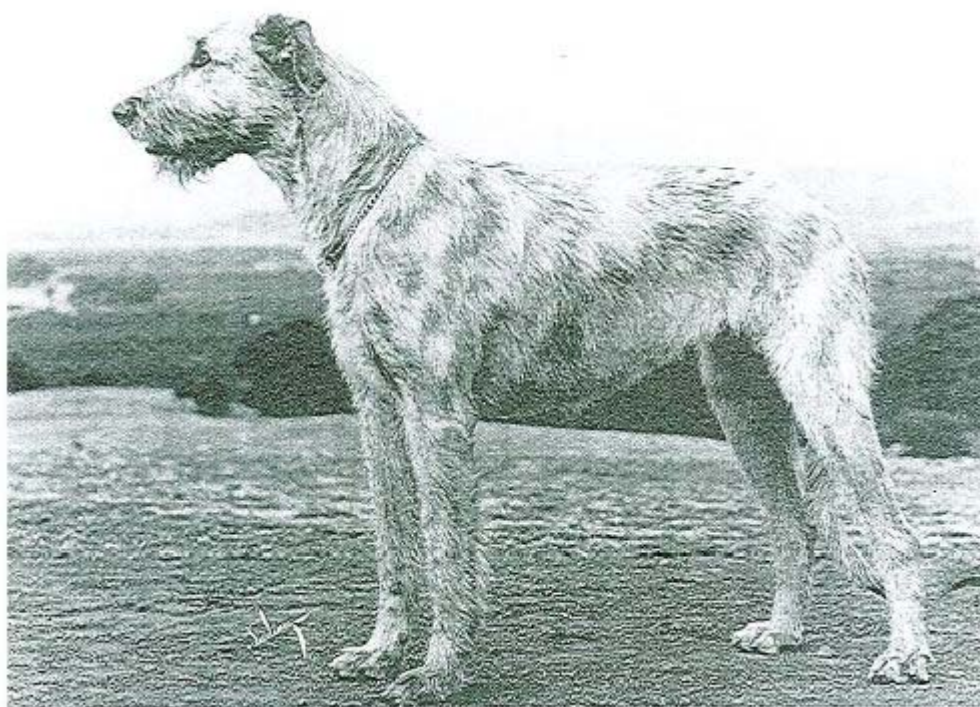
Some typical Irish Wolfhound heads



The head should show strength, with good fill in front of the eyes to give strength to the jaw. It should have a slight even tapering from the backskull to the nose. The skull should not be broad as in a mastiff-like look and there should not be an exaggerated zygomatic arch (not a bulbous look on the side of the skull). The distance from the occiput to the frontal bones should approximate the distance from the frontal bones to the end of the muzzle. There should be very little stop. While the occiput may be prominent, the skull should not be rounded. His ears should be carried in repose tucked tightly to the side of the head, as in a Greyhound's, and when looking at objects in the distance should be semi-erect. The ears are most desirable when small and Greyhound-like. A flat ear is not desirable and detracts from the overall appearance.

*NECK - Rather long, very strong and muscular well arched, without dewlap or loose skin about the throat. Faults listed: short neck; full dewlap.*

The neck must be strong where it attaches to the head and flare to breadth and width where it joins the chest and shoulder. It must fit smoothly into the withers. The neck should be strong with well developed muscles. The Irish Wolfhound cannot function in his role as a hunter of large game without the strength of jaw and neck to bring down its quarry. Captain Graham called for "a neck thick in comparison to his form, and very muscular". It should be well arched and powerful.



Although wanting more bend of stifle, an otherwise noteworthy young bitch showing correct neck.



Irish Wolfhounds illustrating desirable chest, back and forequarters



*CHEST - Very deep. Breast wide. Faults listed: too narrow or too broad a chest.*

The chest should be deep with the lowest point at or just below the elbow. The brisket and forechest are well filled and rounded, never hollow. There should be depth and breath of chest to allow lung and heart room. Chest capacity depends on long ribs which should be well-sprung, but should never approach a barrel-shape.

*BACK - Rather long than short. Loins, arched. Faults listed: sunken or hollow or quite straight back; too short in body.*

In the topline, the slight rise over the loin is a critical part of the gazehound structure. The entire back is not arched, nor does the topline fall away. The topline should not dip behind the shoulders nor be roached, flat, sagging or sloping. Incorrect shoulders, rear assembly, short ribcage and lack of muscling in the loin area can all contribute to a poor topline. This is a very serious fault in a coursing dog whose loin must have the strength and musculature to extend and contract at a gallop. The loin should be broad, powerful, well muscled, linking the moderately sloping croup and tail.

Length of ribcage is very important as it contributes to the support of the spine as well as the proper belly tuck up and topline. In addition, chest capacity depends on long ribs, which should be well sprung, and neither barrel shaped nor flat. The body should be long, well ribbed up, with ribs well sprung and great breadth across the hips

*TAIL - Long and slightly curved, of moderate thickness, and well covered with hair.*

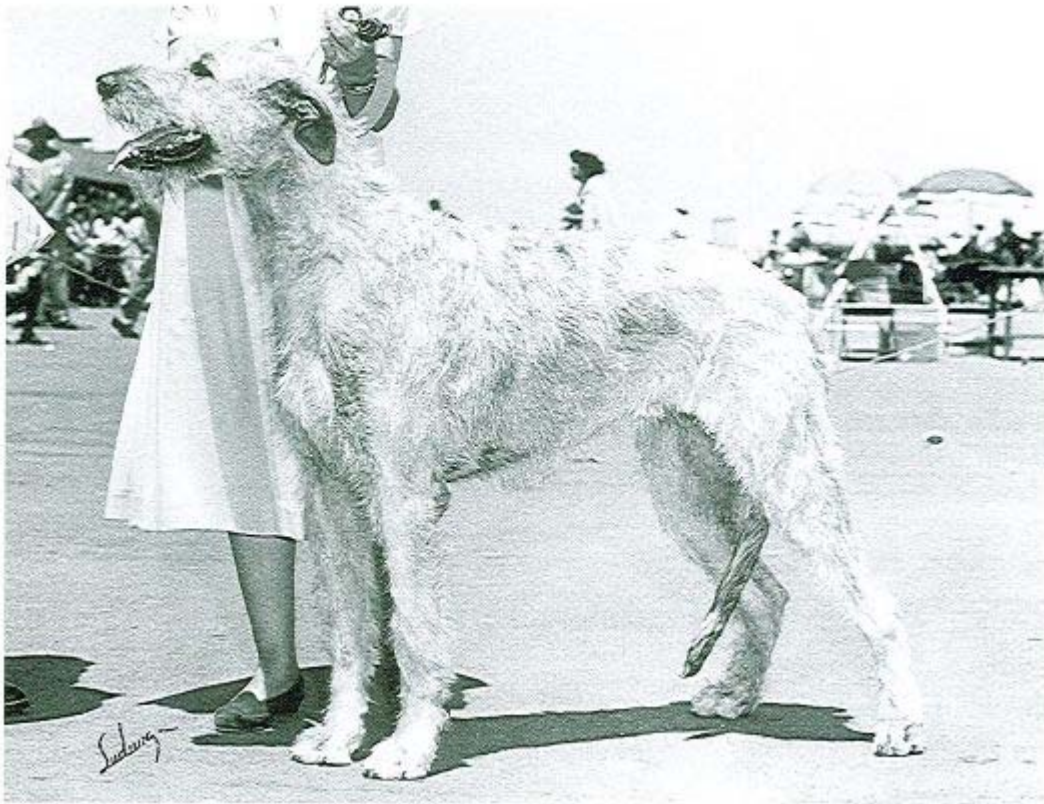
The hair cover gives protection to the tail. The tail when carried correctly in the gallop, acts as a rudder, moving constantly to enable fast turns. When trotting, the tail should not be carried above the topline, but rather down with a slight curve at the end. The Irish Wolfhound alert in the ring with other dogs may carry his tail up, but it should drop to an ideal position when he is calmer.

*BELLY - Well drawn up.*

The underline is affected by the rib cage which should extend well back before it curves upward to the tuck-up or drawn up belly. The Greyhound outline in all sighthounds call for a deep chest to give heart and lung room. This must be combined with the correct tuck-up, without which the dog cannot gallop correctly.

*FOREQUARTERS - Shoulders, muscular; giving breadth of chest, set sloping. Elbows well under neither turned inwards nor outwards.*

The scapula should be well laid back into the topline and the upperarm should be set back under the dog. In addition to the angular relationship of scapula and humerus as viewed from the side, the elbow should be set well under the dog fitting closely to the chest wall. This is clearly described in the Standard when it states that the elbows should turn neither inwards nor outwards. The shoulders should be well tied in with smooth muscles, not heavy or bulky over the shoulder blades.



Pair of bitches illustrating powerful hindquarters and muscular forearms



*LEG - Forearms muscular; and the whole leg strong and quite straight. Faults listed: bent forelegs; Overbent fetlocks.*

The legs should be heavily boned with well developed muscling, conveying an appearance of strength and power. Pasterns should be set slightly sloping to create a cushioning effect in the gait. Pasterns too straight can cause a dog to knuckle over.

*HINDQUARTERS - Muscular thighs and second thigh, long and strong as in the Greyhound, and hocks well let down and turning neither in nor out. Faults listed: weak hindquarters and a general want of muscle.*

As in any galloping hound, the pelvis should be broad and powerful, with long, strong and muscular thighs and second thighs. A well-muscled second thigh is needed if the hocks are to be strong and flexible to give proper drive in motion. Hocks will be low and well let down when there is good angulation above the hock. There should be good breadth of stifle, and the List of Points in Order of Merit call for the stifles to be 'nicely bent'. Over-angulation is not desirable in the Irish Wolfhound and serves no purpose in the hunt. Hindquarters should be balanced in relationship to the forequarters.

*FEET - Moderately large and round, neither turned inwards nor outwards. Toes, well-arched and closed. Nails, very strong and curved. Faults listed: twisted feet, spreading toes.*

Moderately large refers to both bone and a large, well cushioned pad. Round indicates a hare foot is not desirable. The toes should be tight, close and well arched. Such a foot will have spring and give as it hits the ground, absorbing the shock of movement.

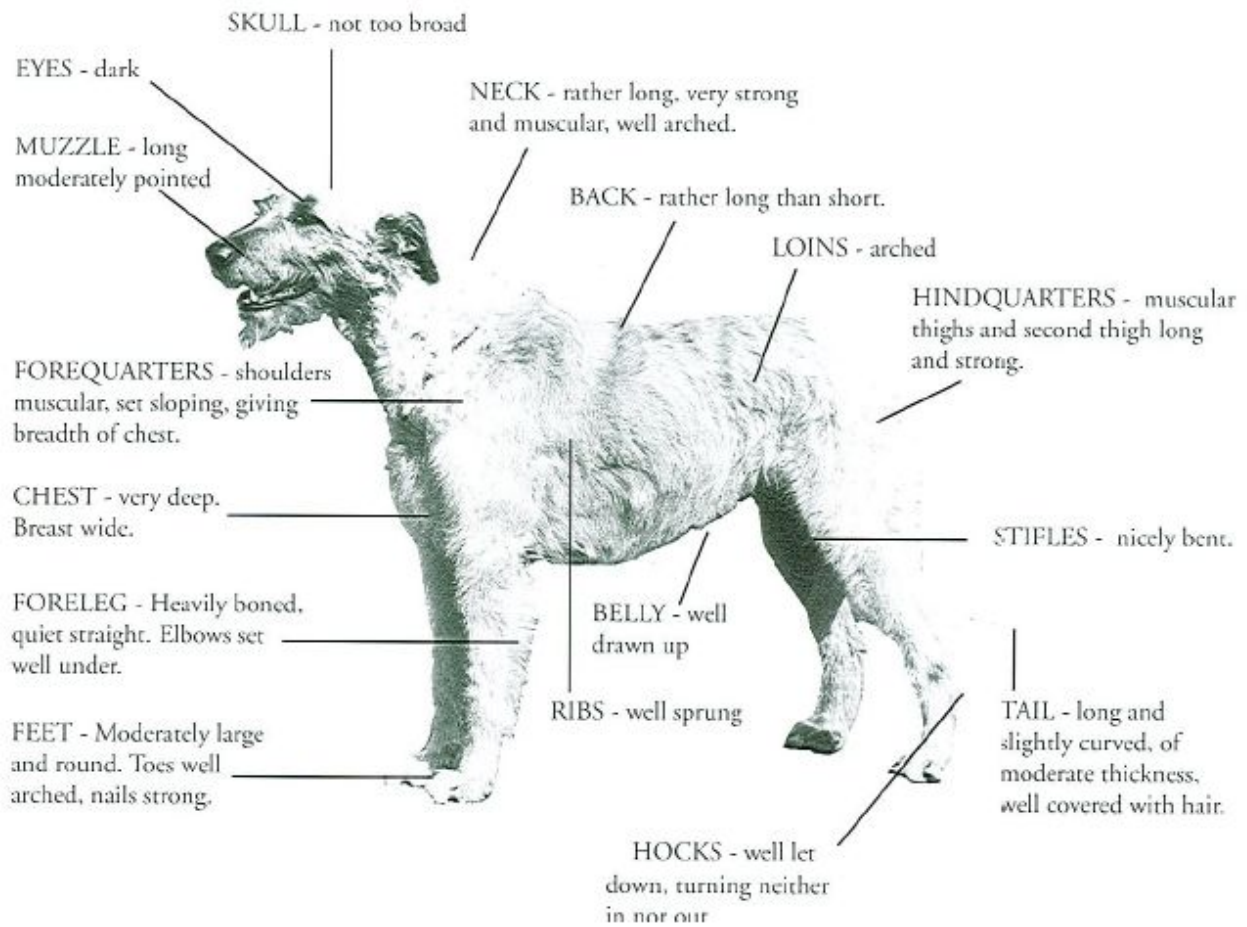
*HAIR - Rough and hard on body, legs and head; especially wiry and long over eyes and under jaw.*

The Irish Wolfhound is a rough-coated breed, with a dense, soft undercoat, and a hard, wiry outercoat, which makes him impervious to all types of weather. A woolly or silky coat is out of character and incorrect.

*COLOR AND MARKING - The recognized colors are gray, brindle, red, black, pure white, fawn or any color that appears in the Deerhound. Faults: lip or nose liver-colored or lacking pigmentation.*

**HEAD** - long and level, carried high.  
Frontal bones of forehead very slightly raised, very little indentation between eyes.

**COAT** - rough and hard on body, legs and head; wiry and long over eyes and under jaw.



Minimum height and weight of dogs should be 32 inches and 120 pounds;  
of bitches, 30 inches and 105 pounds.

## The Standard of Excellence for the Irish Wolfhound

**General Appearance** - Of great size and commanding appearance, the Irish Wolfhound is remarkable in combining power and swiftness with keen sight. The largest and tallest of the galloping hounds, in general type he is a rough-coated, Greyhoundlike breed; very muscular, strong though gracefully built; movements easy and active; head and neck carried high, the tail carried with an upward sweep with a slight curve towards the extremity. The minimum height and weight of dogs should be 32 inches and 120 pounds; of bitches, 30 inches and 105 pounds; these to apply only to hounds over 18 months of age. Anything below this should be debarred from competition. Great size, including height at shoulder and proportionate length of body, is the desideratum to be aimed at, and it is desired to firmly establish a race that shall average from 32 to 34 inches in dogs, showing the requisite power, activity, courage and symmetry.

**Head** - Long, the frontal bones of the forehead very slightly raised and very little indentation between the eyes. Skull, not too broad. Muzzle, long and moderately pointed. Ears, small and Greyhoundlike in carriage.

**Neck** - Rather long, very strong and muscular, well arched, without dewlap or loose skin about the throat.

**Chest** - Very deep. Breast wide. Back- Rather long than short. Loins arched.

**Tail** - Long and slightly curved, of moderate thickness, and well covered with hair.

**Belly** - Well drawn up.

**Forequarters** - Shoulders, muscular, giving breadth of chest, set sloping. Elbows well under, neither turned inwards nor outwards. **Leg** - Forearm muscular, and the whole leg strong and quite straight.

**Hindquarters** - Muscular thighs and second thigh long and strong as in the Greyhound, and hocks well let down and turning neither in nor out.

**Feet** - Moderately large and round, neither turned inwards nor outwards. Toes, well arched and closed. Nails, very strong and curved.

**Hair** - Rough and hard on body, legs and head; especially wiry and long over eyes and under jaw.

**Color and Markings** - The recognized colors are gray, brindle, red, black, pure white, fawn, or any color that appears in the Deerhound.

**Faults** - Too light or heavy a head, too highly arched frontal bone; large ears and hanging flat to the face; short neck; full dewlap; too narrow or too broad a chest; sunken or hollow or quite straight back; bent forelegs; overbent fetlocks; twisted feet; spreading toes; too curly a tail; weak hindquarters and a general want of muscle; too short in body; lips or nose liver-colored or lacking pigmentation.

## List of Points in Order of Merit

1. Typical. The Irish Wolfhound is a rough-coated Greyhound-like breed, the tallest of the coursing Hounds and remarkable in combining power and swiftness.
2. Great size and commanding appearance.
3. Movements easy and active.
4. Head, long and level, carried high.
5. Forelegs, heavily boned, quite straight, elbows well set under.
6. Thighs long and muscular; second thighs, well muscled, stifles nicely bent.
7. Coat, rough and hard, specially wiry and long over eyes and under jaw.
8. Body, long, well ribbed up, with ribs well sprung, and great breadth across hips.
9. Loins arched, belly well drawn up.
10. Ears, small with Greyhound-like carriage.
11. Feet, moderately large and round; toes, close, well arched.
12. Neck, long, well arched and very strong.
13. Chest, very deep, moderately broad.
14. Shoulders, muscular, set sloping.
15. Tail, long and slightly curved.
16. Eyes, dark.

Note - The above in no way alters the Standard of Excellence. which must in all cases be rigidly adhered to; they simply give the various points in order of merit. If in any case they appear at variance with the Standard of Excellence. it is the latter which is correct.



The Irish Wolfhound Standard was written  
in England in 1885.  
It was adopted by the Irish Wolfhound Club of America  
at its formation in 1926.

Since that time it has only been revised twice,  
in 1947 when the minimum heights and weights  
were increased, and in 1950 when the reference  
to the Great Dane and Deerhound were eliminated.

That this Standard that remains essentially unchanged  
from the original of 1885 can continue to produce  
the quality animals seen today,  
as well as allow historical Irish Wolfhounds to  
illustrate these pages,  
is a tribute to its writer, Captain George Augustus Graham.