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Irish Wolfhound Dog Breed Information – All You Need to Know

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Towering above other dog breeds, the Irish Wolfhound proudly lays claim to the title of the American



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Kennel Club's tallest dog breed. The Irish Wolfhound's long history is filled with fascinating stories of this breed's grandeur and tremendous size. For well over 1500 years, the Irish Wolfhound has been documented in history as man's best friend. Though the Irish Wolfhound has had its highs and lows, including a dangerously close brush with extinction, this gentle giant has been an asset as a hunting companion and loyal ally of mankind. Today, the Irish Wolfhound is almost as beloved as ever, and ranks the 76th most popular dog of the 193 club breeds.

IRISH WOLFHOUND APPEARANCE

The Irish Wolfhound is an enormous hound with unparalleled size. These leggy hounds stand at least 30-32 inches at the shoulder, and it's not uncommon for males to touch the three-foot mark. This breed can be expected to weigh 105 to 180 pounds, rounding out its all-around formidable appearance.

Irish Wolfhounds sport a double coat that includes a soft undercoat and a rough, wiry outer coat. There are thirteen standard colors in the Irish Wolfhound's coat, including blue, black, brindle, cream, gray, red, silver, and white. The presence of black, gray, or white markings can also be common in the Irish Wolfhound, though none are standard in the breed.

Though tall, the Irish Wolfhound also has a great deal of power and strength, giving it a muscular, yet mobile appearance. This strength comes from the dog's well-muscled, long neck and a deep, wide chest. The Irish Wolfhound's back is slightly elongated, leading to a set of strong thighs and round feet that are poised for agile movements at a moment's notice.

TEMPERAMENT/PERSONALITY

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Despite the Irish Wolfhound's famed ability to handle a wolf in combat, this breed is actually quite gentle and makes for a rather inept watchdog. The Irish Wolfhound is a dog that has evolved alongside humans for thousands of years, and as such will be very affectionate toward his family, including any children. Sadly, the Irish Wolfhound's life expectancy is very limited, and this giant breed typically lives just 6-8 years.

The Irish Wolfhound tends to be very docile around everyone and will be polite and respectful toward guests, strangers, and other dogs. Since this breed is so large and is instilled with a hunting instinct, it may have the urge to chase cats and other small animals. If raised with a cat or a small dog, however, the Irish Wolfhound should adapt just fine and treat the other animal with respect around the house. Due to its size alone, the Irish Wolfhound may not be the best dog for families with toddlers.

While the Irish Wolfhound has a seemingly unshakable equanimity, this breed will defend its family. Similarly, when outdoors, the Irish Wolfhound won't hesitate to remind you of its pedigree and expert capability as a sighthound and hunter on the open course.

Irish Wolfhounds love being in the presence of their people and may experience separation anxiety if left alone for too long. Though they can be great travel partners, their size can often make travel difficult and require a large SUV and a custom crate.

CARING FOR AN IRISH WOLFHOUND

The Irish Wolfhound is a breed unlike any other. Recognizing and adhering to certain best practices will go a long way in caring for these majestic dogs.

NUTRITION

Irish Wolfhounds are large and need plenty of food, particularly during the rapid growth they experience as puppies. Since Irish Wolfhounds are very much at risk for the dangerous condition known as bloat, vigorous walks and physical activity should be avoided immediately preceding and following feeding. A balanced diet of protein should consist of a minimum 18 percent protein for adult Wolfhounds, and at least five percent fat. An animal protein source like fish, chicken, or turkey found in an [organic dog food](#) or a [wet dog food](#) should be sufficient for providing adequate sustenance for the Irish Wolfhound.

EXERCISE

The Irish Wolfhound is a highly adaptable breed and will likely adopt the lifestyle of its owner. Nevertheless, it's important these dogs get the exercise they need to stay healthy. Though not an excessively energetic breed, the Irish Wolfhound will love to participate in canine sports, particularly lure coursing. These dogs will thrive in an open field where they can show off their full speed. The Irish Wolfhound will almost certainly appreciate an [electronic dog door](#) that allows it free reign of the backyard. In addition, the Irish Wolfhound will benefit from a walk or two every day, so a [leash for dogs that pull](#) may be a worthwhile investment to consider.

TRAINING

Irish Wolfhounds should be trained from a young age to ensure proper behavior. The Irish Wolfhound's size and intelligence means that if left untrained and bored, destruction of your personal property and anything else it can get its paws on will be the likely result. This breed is plenty smart and generally happy to listen, making it highly trainable. Since the Irish Wolfhound is a sensitive dog, using praise, rewards, and positive

training techniques are the most effective ways to train these dogs.

HEALTH

Though this massive dog is certainly wonderful and easy to fall in love with, the Irish Wolfhound is, unfortunately, known for being a high-risk breed when it comes to health concerns. As mentioned earlier, the Irish Wolfhound is susceptible to bloat, and care should be taken to avoid this condition through a proper feeding schedule, in addition to learning the symptoms and acting quickly in the event that bloat does occur.

Unsurprisingly, the Irish Wolfhound's height and weight make it a target for hip and elbow dysplasia. An [orthopedic dog bed](#) may help to relieve pain on the Irish Wolfhound's bones and joints, and a [dog joint supplement](#) may also prove beneficial. Maintaining a healthy weight and avoiding obesity can also go a long way in reducing the stress placed on the Irish Wolfhound's body.

Other health concerns that can be seen in the Irish Wolfhound include cardiomyopathy, hypothyroidism, osteosarcoma, liver shunt, progressive retinal atrophy (PRA), and von Willebrand's disease. Many of these conditions are related to the Irish Wolfhound's size. For this reason, and others, it's important for anyone considering the addition of an Irish Wolfhound in their family to work with a reputable breeder, and to schedule regular visits to a veterinarian experienced with this breed. As with any dogs, Irish Wolfhounds will need to have their ears and teeth checked and cleaned to help ward off infection.

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