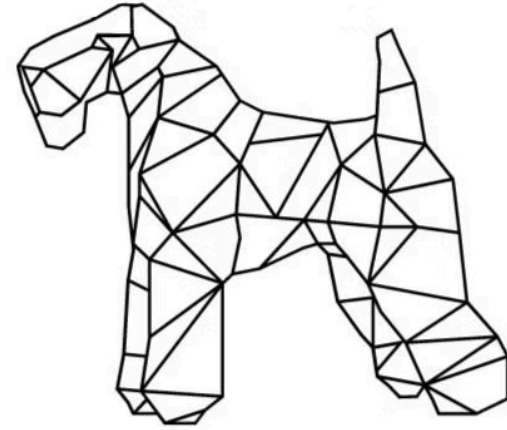


Finding Your Wheaten Companion

A guide to purchasing a Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier from reputable breeders and rescue organizations



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Meet the Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier

Before bringing a Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier into your home, it's essential to understand their unique traits and needs. This beloved breed is known for its distinctive personality and great companionship.



Joyful & Affectionate Personality

Known for their signature soft and silky coat and wonderfully joyful personality, Wheatens are often described as “forever puppies.” This isn't just because of their playful spirit, but also their boundless enthusiasm and curiosity that lasts well into adulthood. They are incredibly affectionate and devoted companions, always seeking to be at the heart of family life. They greet loved ones with their famous “Wheaten Greetin'” a truly exuberant display of affection with leaps that can reach impressive heights. Throughout the day, Wheatens thrive on involvement, whether it's 'helping' with chores, lounging at your feet while you work, or playfully nudging you for attention. Even as seniors, they retain a spark of puppy-like mischief, often initiating play. Their need for companionship is strong; they want to be your shadow and participate in every adventure, big or small, making them incredibly engaging and heartwarming companions.



Intelligent & Spirited Temperament

Wheatens are affectionate and loyal, but they carry the classic terrier streak of independence and stubbornness. Training should be consistent, positive, and firm, with early socialization being key. They are generally good with children and other dogs when raised with proper boundaries, but their bouncy enthusiasm can be overwhelming for very small kids and small dogs.

Wheatens are true "velcro dogs." They thrive on physical closeness and attention, often following you from room to room, wanting to be touching you on the couch, or leaning against your legs as you stand. If allowed, they'll happily sleep in your bed, being your constant shadow and craving your presence. This desire for connection makes them incredibly devoted companions.



Grooming & Exercise Needs

Their non-shedding, hypoallergenic coat is beautiful but demands significant attention. Daily grooming is crucial to prevent mats and tangles, requiring specialized tools like a slicker brush and greyhound comb. Additionally, professional grooming sessions are necessary about every 6 weeks for trimming and bathing.

Beyond grooming, Wheatens are exceptionally active dogs, and require a good deal of mental stimulation. To keep their intelligent minds engaged, incorporate activities such as puzzle toys, regular training sessions, and nose work. Wheatens excel in various dog sports such as agility, rally, obedience, barn hunt, scent work, and fast cat. Without adequate physical and mental outlets, they can become restless or mischievous. Joining our [facebook](#) communities for wheaten training and performance sports will help get you involved in some great activities.



Understanding the Original Purpose

To truly understand the Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, prospective owners must appreciate their deep roots as an all-purpose farm dog in 18th and 19th-century Ireland. Developed by tenant farmers who couldn't afford specialized hunting breeds, Wheatens were bred for practicality and work ethic over mere appearance. They were versatile, hardy companions expected to earn their keep by herding livestock, guarding property, and controlling vermin, often living closely with families in small cottages.

Understanding this rich history is crucial for prospective owners. It helps explain why Wheatens are not always content as mere couch potatoes and clarifies their need for both significant physical exercise and mental challenges. It also empowers owners to provide appropriate outlets, ultimately setting realistic expectations about their training management.

Understanding Reputable Wheaten Breeders

1

Reputable breeders are dedicated professionals who prioritize the health, temperament, and welfare of their dogs above profit. They are registered with recognized kennel clubs like the American Kennel Club (AKC) or Canadian Kennel Club (CKC), which maintain breed standards and ethical guidelines. These breed standards define the ideal physical characteristics (e.g., coat color and texture, ear set, bite), temperament traits (e.g., joyful, confident, spirited but not aggressive), and sometimes even working ability that define the Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier. Reputable breeders also actively participate as members of the [SCWTCA](#) (Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier Club of America) and/or [local breed clubs](#). Membership in these specialized clubs indicates a breeder's deep commitment to the breed's specific well-being. It means they adhere to a strict code of ethics—such as the SCWTCA Code of Ethics, which mandates specific health testing before breeding, prohibits sales to pet stores or brokers, requires thorough screening of prospective buyers, and insists that breeders take back or assist in helping place any dog they have bred if the owner can no longer keep it. This commitment goes beyond basic kennel club requirements, focusing on genetic health, temperament, and the preservation of the Wheaten Terrier's unique traits. This active involvement provides an additional layer of assurance for prospective buyers.

2

These breeders invest significantly in comprehensive health testing for genetic conditions specific to their breed, such as Protein-Losing Nephropathy (PLN), Protein-Losing Enteropathy (PLE), Renal Dysplasia (RD), and hip dysplasia. And annual eye exams performed by board-certified veterinary ophthalmologists. They also utilize genetic testing through reputable DNA labs to screen for inheritable diseases. These thorough health checks are crucial for minimizing the risk of passing on genetic conditions and ensuring the long-term well-being of the puppies. Furthermore, reputable breeders implement structured puppy-raising programs that are vital for early development, exposing puppies to a variety of appropriate stimuli during critical developmental periods. This means introducing them to different household noises (vacuum cleaners, doorbells), various surfaces and textures (grass, carpet, tile), car rides, and supervised interactions with different people (men, women, children) and other vaccinated, healthy dogs. They also begin early handling exercises, introduce crate training concepts, and work on basic manners and potty-training foundations. These programs help ensure puppies are well-adjusted, confident, resilient, and ready to adjust successfully to their new homes, laying the groundwork for a happy and well-behaved companion.

3

Perhaps most importantly, responsible breeders carefully screen prospective families through detailed applications, interviews, and home visits. This thorough vetting process and multiple follow-up conversations, helps ensure each puppy finds a suitable forever home. Breeders will ask detailed questions about your lifestyle, such as your work schedule and how much time the dog will spend alone, your home environment (e.g., "Do you have a fenced yard?", "Are you renting or owning?", "What is your living situation?"), your previous experience with dogs, and your family composition (e.g., "Are there young children?", "What other pets do you have?"). They'll also inquire about your activity level and plans for things like training, grooming, and veterinary care. By understanding your expectations and resources, they can match you with a puppy whose temperament and needs align with your family, ensuring a successful and happy life for both the puppy and its new owners. Prospective owners should expect transparency, open communication, and patience throughout this comprehensive process.

4

Reputable breeders provide comprehensive health guarantees, typically covering specific genetic conditions common to the breed. They also remain available for lifetime support, meaning they will answer questions and offer guidance regarding training, health concerns, behavior, and general care throughout the dog's entire life. Their contracts often include important clauses such as a return policy (requiring the dog to be returned to the breeder if the owner can no longer keep it), breeding restrictions to protect the breed standard, and requirements for ongoing health care. Furthermore, they often require spay/neuter agreements for pet-quality puppies. This ensures that only dogs specifically evaluated and chosen for breeding purposes contribute to the gene pool, preventing irresponsible breeding while preserving the breed's integrity. This commitment demonstrates their lifelong responsibility for every dog they bring into the world, emphasizing the importance of ethical breeding practices and the welfare of their puppies.

What Makes a Breeder Reputable?



Official Registration

AKC registered breeding programs with documented pedigrees and breed standard compliance. Also belong to the National Breed Club and/or local breed clubs.



Health Testing

Comprehensive genetic screening for breed-specific conditions: Hips, Eyes, PLN Variant Gene Testing, and Biochemical Profile.



Puppy Programs

Structured socialization, early neurological stimulation, or age-appropriate developmental activities.



Family Screening

Thorough application process, interviews, Virtual or home visits, and lifetime commitment to puppy placement success.



The Dangers of Puppy Mills and Backyard Breeders

Not all sources of puppies have dogs' best interests at heart. Understanding the differences can save you from heartbreak and help combat unethical breeding practices.



Puppy Mills

Commercial breeding operations that prioritize quantity over quality, keeping dogs in poor conditions with minimal veterinary care or socialization. Puppies often have serious health and behavioral problems. Many pet store puppies come from these facilities, despite claims otherwise.



Backyard Breeders

These are amateur breeders who lack knowledge, resources, or commitment to responsible breeding. They typically don't perform health testing, may breed dogs with genetic problems, and often prioritize profit over puppy welfare. Their dogs may lack proper socialization, leading to behavioral issues later.



Pet Store Puppies

While stores may seem convenient, reputable breeders never sell through pet stores. These puppies typically come from puppy mills or backyard breeders. You can't meet the parents, verify health testing, or see where puppies were raised—all critical factors in getting a healthy, well-adjusted dog.

The Hidden Costs of Irresponsible Breeding

Why Source Matters

Purchasing from backyard breeders, puppy mills, or pet stores may seem like saving money initially, but often leads to devastating, long-term consequences for both the dog and its family. Puppies from these sources frequently develop expensive and chronic health problems that could have been prevented through proper health testing and responsible breeding practices.



Behavioral Issues

Beyond these significant medical costs, these puppies often struggle with profound behavioral issues due to poor socialization during critical developmental periods. "Poor socialization" means these puppies are often raised in isolation, with little to no exposure to normal household sounds, different people, children, or various environments during the crucial 3 to 16-week window when they learn to adapt to the world. This lack of early exposure can lead to lifelong challenges.

Specific behavioral issues can manifest as severe fear of strangers, separation anxiety, reactivity towards other dogs, inability to handle normal household activities or new situations, and noise phobias. Addressing these issues requires extensive training or behavior modification, which involves working with professional dog trainers or veterinary behaviorists. Sessions can cost **\$100-200 per hour**, and successful modification often requires months or even years of consistent effort, specialized management strategies, and sometimes even anti-anxiety medication. This adds considerable emotional and financial strain on families.



Genetic Conditions

For breeds like Wheatens, this can include severe genetic conditions such as Protein Losing Nephropathy (PLN), Protein Losing Enteropathy (PLE), Renal Dysplasia (RD), hip dysplasia, and various eye problems. The treatment for chronic conditions like these can be staggering, often ranging from **\$3,000 to \$10,000+ annually** for ongoing medications, special diets, and frequent veterinary visits throughout the dog's life.

Emotional Toll & Perpetuation of Suffering

The emotional toll on owners is immense. Bonding with a dog only to face chronic illness and severe behavioral challenges can be heartbreaking. It limits family activities, leads to difficult decisions about treatment versus quality of life, and can evoke guilt over unknowingly supporting unethical breeding practices.

Most importantly: Every purchase from these irresponsible sources directly perpetuates the cycle of suffering. The demand creates a profit incentive for puppy mills and backyard breeders to continue their operations. Dogs are kept in inhumane conditions, often bred relentlessly, and a lack of health testing ensures that severe genetic problems are passed on to future generations, condemning more puppies and their future families to a life of avoidable pain and heartache.

Understanding Reputable Rescue Organizations

Rescue organizations offer another excellent path to finding your perfect companion. Reputable rescues are dedicated to saving dogs and matching them with suitable forever homes through careful evaluation and support.



Selective Intake

Reputable rescues carefully choose which dogs they can responsibly help, considering their resources, expertise, and ability to provide appropriate care and placement.



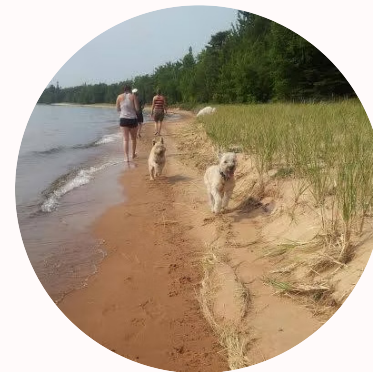
Comprehensive Screening

All incoming dogs receive veterinary examinations, vaccinations, spay/neuter surgery, and behavioral assessments to understand their needs and ideal home environment.



Foster-Based Care

Dogs live in foster homes where volunteers provide individualized attention, continue training, and gather information about personality, quirks, and compatibility factors.



Thoughtful Matching

Rescues use applications, interviews, home visits, and meet-and-greets to ensure successful, lasting placements that benefit both dogs and adopters.

Breed-Specific Rescue Organizations

Specialized Expertise

Breed-specific rescues focus on saving and rehoming particular breeds. Many are affiliated with national breed clubs and staffed by volunteers who have breed knowledge, understand unique characteristics, health concerns, and temperament traits.

These organizations have extensive networks across regions and often pull dogs from shelters, take owner surrenders, or rescue dogs from puppy mills. Their breed knowledge ensures proper evaluation and matching.

What They Offer

- Deep understanding of breed-specific needs and behaviors
- Access to purebred dogs without supporting commercial breeding
- Detailed histories when available, or expert behavioral assessments
- Breed-specific education and ongoing support for adopters
- Network of fellow breed enthusiasts for community and advice



Red Flags: Warning Signs in Breeders



Access Denied

Won't let you visit the premises, meet parent dogs, or see where puppies are raised. This is a major red flag, often indicating the breeder is hiding poor conditions, sick or poorly cared for parent dogs, overcrowding, unsanitary environments, or dogs kept in cages rather than homes. Legitimate breeders are proud to show their facilities and allow scheduled visits to observe the living conditions and socialization setup, meet at least the mother dog (often the father may be off site), and see how parent dogs interact with people to assess their temperament. Irresponsible breeders may claim "biosecurity concerns" but won't offer video calls or will suggest meeting in parking lots or neutral locations, claiming parent dogs are "at another location" or unavailable. They might also rush the process to prevent questions. During a legitimate visit, you should be able to observe clean, spacious living areas, parent dogs that are friendly and well-cared for with good body condition and coat quality, and puppies raised in a stimulating home environment with exposure to household activities and evidence of socialization efforts. Meeting parent dogs is crucial to assess temperament (genetics and early learning from parents influence puppy behavior) and verify the health and condition of breeding dogs. Red flags during any visit include fearful, aggressive, or poorly socialized parent dogs; dirty or cramped conditions; dogs that appear overbred, underweight, or neglected; or puppies kept isolated from family activity.



Always Available

A breeder with puppies year-round, multiple litters simultaneously, or who breeds multiple different breeds is a significant red flag. Reputable breeders carefully plan one or two litters per year at most, prioritizing the health and recovery of the mother dogs, which year-round availability indicates is not happening. Multiple simultaneous litters suggest an inability to provide individual attention and proper socialization crucial for a puppy's development. Breeding multiple breeds indicates a lack of dedicated expertise in breed-specific health, temperament, and standards, suggesting a commercial operation focused on profit rather than breed preservation and improvement. Furthermore, a breeder who focuses heavily on price or payment plans, treating puppies as products rather than living beings, is concerning. Responsible breeders often have waiting lists, focus on a single breed they are passionate about, transparently discuss costs while emphasizing health testing and proper raising, and never pressure buyers into financing because they prioritize financially stable homes.



No Documentation

A major red flag is a breeder who cannot provide comprehensive documentation for their breeding dogs and puppies. This includes specific health testing results, verifiable pedigrees, or a clear health guarantee. Vague responses like "my vet says they're healthy" or "I've never had problems" without specific testing documentation are insufficient. Pedigrees are also crucial; a multi-generation pedigree showing lineage and titles earned by ancestors (e.g., championships or performance titles) demonstrates the breeder's knowledge of bloodlines and genetic diversity, helps identify potential health issues that run in lines, and shows informed breeding decisions. While AKC (American Kennel Club) is the most recognized registry with breed standards and breeder requirements, breeders using APRI (America's Pet Registry Inc.) or other alternative registries, or relying solely on USDA licensing, are often red flags. APRI and similar registries have minimal standards and may register dogs from puppy mills or even mixed breeds. USDA licensing only means a commercial breeding facility meets minimum legal standards for animal welfare, not that it's an ethical or high-quality breeder. A lack of AKC papers may indicate dogs aren't purebred or that the parents aren't registered due to poor quality or health issues.



No Questions

A breeder who doesn't screen buyers or ask about your lifestyle, experience, or home environment, and will sell to anyone with money, indicates a lack of concern for the puppies' welfare. A breeder willing to sell to anyone with money is dangerous because it indicates they don't care where puppies end up. These puppies may go to homes unprepared for the breed's needs, leading to behavioral problems or neglect, and ultimately, dogs ending up in shelters when owners can't handle them. This approach enables impulse purchases by people who haven't researched the breed, allows dogs to go to homes that can't afford proper care, or may even sell to individuals who will use dogs for breeding without proper health testing. Another red flag is a breeder often willing to ship puppies to unknown families sight unseen. Reputable breeders meet buyers in person to assess commitment and suitability. Shipping young puppies may lead to adjustment issues. Legitimate breeders prefer buyers willing to travel to pick up the puppy and see where it was raised.

Red Flags: Warning Signs in Rescues

Poor Communication

Unprofessional, inconsistent responses or reluctance to answer questions about their practices, the dog's history, or behavioral assessments.

Minimal Screening

No application process, skips home visits, or approves adoptions immediately without getting to know you or ensuring good matches.

Lack of Transparency

Won't provide veterinary records, behavioral evaluations, or honest information about the dog's challenges, medical needs, or history.

No Support System

Offers no post-adoption support, training resources, or return policy if the placement doesn't work out for legitimate reasons

High-Pressure Tactics

Rushes decisions, claims "We have a lot of people interested" or makes you feel guilty about asking questions or requesting time to consider.

Financial Irregularities

Adoption fees seem extremely high without justification, or suspiciously low. Unclear about where fees go or how funds support the organization.

Your Journey to Responsible Dog Ownership

Finding the right dog from the right source takes time, research, and patience—but it's worth every effort. Whether you choose a reputable breeder or rescue organization, you're making a decision that affects a living being for their entire lifetime.

Do Your Research

I highly suggest you explore [**SCWTCA.org**](https://www.scwtca.org), where you can find a comprehensive list of reputable breeders and rescues. Additionally, I encourage you to join the [**SCWTCA Facebook**](#) page to connect with our fun and supportive Wheaten community. It's a wonderful opportunity to deepen your knowledge of the breed and make meaningful connections with fellow Wheaten enthusiasts.

Take Your Time

Exercise patience throughout the process. Securing a suitable dog from a reputable source often requires a waiting period, but this diligence is invariably rewarding. Hasty decisions can frequently result in challenging outcomes. Reputable breeders typically maintain a waitlist for their puppies, offering an invaluable opportunity to cultivate a relationship with them during this period.

Prioritize Ethics

Choose breeders who consistently uphold high standards of animal welfare, placing the well-being of their dogs above commercial gain or personal convenience. Ethical breeders invest significant effort in the early development of their puppies, carefully selecting suitable homes that align with the breed's needs and their commitment to its preservation.

Remember: By choosing responsibly, you're not just getting a wonderful companion—you're also refusing to support cruel breeding practices and helping create a better world for all dogs. Your informed decision makes a difference.

For More Information or Customized Training Contact Coach Karli

Professional In-Person and Virtual Training Sessions Available Worldwide



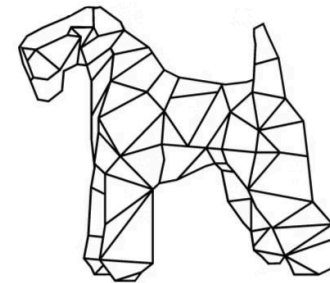
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