



The West Highland White Terrier Club of NSW

The West Highland White Terrier Club of NSW is a band of enthusiastic Westie owners (both show and pet owners) and we extend an invitation to all Westie owners and admirers to join our club and participate in our specialty show days, grooming days, fun days and Christmas functions etc.

If you're interested in entering the show ring with your Westie, the club will be happy to assist you with information.

Please contact any of the club's office bearers through our web site if they can be of any assistance to you or your Westie.

President: Sally Duncan

Vice Presidents: David LeBrun
 Julie Gordon

Secretary: Vicki Regner

Treasurer: Peter Jefferson

Publicity Officer: Sally Duncan

Committee: Debbie LeBrun
 Yasmin Bowers

A Brief History of the Westie

During the second half of the 19th century, Colonel E D Malcolm of Poltalloch in Scotland developed a breed of terrier to hunt foxes in the rocky terrain of the highlands of Scotland. The dog needed to be small but hardy and flexible. Also brave enough to fight its way into a fox's lair between the rocks, against stiff opposition if necessary.

They were selectively bred as all white terriers so that they could be easily distinguished from the fox against the drab background of the countryside. The breed was originally named the Poltalloch Terrier but later this was changed to the West Highland White Terrier where the breed originated.

The West Highland White Terrier was recognised as a breed by the English Kennel Club in 1907 and was recognised in Australia in the 1920's.

What a Westie Should Look Like

The Westie is a small strongly built, courageous and hardy looking terrier displaying no small amount of self-esteem. He is a very affectionate character and a fine dog and pet. The "perfect" Westie should have the following conformation.

- ✿ The head should be thickly coated, with the skull being slightly domed, showing a slight tapering from the ears to the eyes and further tapering of the foreface from the eyes to the muzzle where there is a distinct stop.
- ✿ The eyes are very dark and piercing, of medium size and set well apart.
- ✿ The jaws are strong and level with the teeth in a scissor bite.
- ✿ The nose must be black and fairly large.
- ✿ The ears are small, sharply pointed, held firmly erect and covered in short, velvety hair.
- ✿ The neck is fairly long and muscular, gradually thickening towards the base where it merges into broad bladed shoulders which slope nicely backwards.
- ✿ The compact body has a level back and broad strong loins.
- ✿ The chest and ribs are deep. The ribs are well arched in the upper half giving a flattish side appearance. The elbow should be held well into the body.
- ✿ The hindquarters are strong, muscular and wide across the top. The forelegs are short, muscular and straight, covered with thick hard hair. The hind legs are short sinewy and have very muscular thighs which are not set too far apart. The hocks are bent and set well under the body.
- ✿ The feet are round, strong and thickly covered with short hard hair. Nails and pads should be black. The forefeet are larger than the hind feet.
- ✿ The coat must be pure white and must be double-coated, with an outer coat about 2 inches long and free from curl. The undercoat is short, soft and close.
- ✿ The tail is 5 to 6 inches in length and covered with hard hair with no feathering. It should be straight and carried jauntily straight up, but not over the back.
- ✿ Movement is free, straight and easy all round.

Living with a Westie

Westies are great to live with, they LOVE their families. They are cheerful, happy dogs and are suitable for families or singles. They come in only one colour which is WHITE.

They expect to be part of the family and are not the right breed of dog for you if you just want a dog to be left out in the yard or on their own for too long. They love to be out and about, either in the car or for walks. They live happily in houses or units. If you live in a unit they need to be walked a couple of times a day.

They should never be let out without a lead as they are terriers and have a terrier temperament. If they see something that interests them, they will take off after it even if that means across a busy street.

They are ideal playmates for children but of course all dogs and young children should be supervised.

Ideally, their hard coats should be hand stripped to keep them that way, but for pets a trip to the local grooming parlour (look for one that knows how to clip Westies) about three or four times a year should keep them looking like a Westie should. Hand stripped coats don't shed but clipped coats will have some shedding.

Westies are TERRIERS, which means that they are very intelligent and learn fast, but they have a large streak of independence. They don't as a rule start fights but they won't back down when challenged, even by a bigger dog. They need to be socialised both with people and other dogs during the first three months of their lives.

Westies love to know what's going on around them and like to be able to see outside to watch the world go by.

They are full of life even into old age if they're fed correctly. They do well on a natural diet of fresh meat and vegetables. They can live to be 15 to 16 years of age. They have great dispositions and get on with everyone.

A pet owner who has decided that they would like their dog to "just have one litter" before having them de-sexed could unknowingly be passing on genetic problems to the puppies of that litter. It is an "old wives tale" that a female should have a litter before she is de-sexed. It is safer for your pet to have them de-sexed before their first season. It is also much healthier for males to be de-sexed as well. Check with your vet

In addition, you should realise that breeders may not only have pups available. Sometimes when they have bred one or two litters from a particular dog they may then offer that dog for sale on the proviso that the dog is spayed or neutered. Ask your breeder about this.

The cost of a Westie puppy is completely up to the Breeder and there is generally no difference in the cost of show or pet Westie puppies.

When you are choosing a breeder some of the things you may want to know are:

- ✿ How long have they been breeding dogs?
- ✿ How many litters have they bred (many litters over a short period of time may indicate a puppy farm operation)?
- ✿ Whether they are involved the show or performance ring?
- ✿ Do they belong to Dogs NSW and have a Breeders Prefix?
- ✿ Do they belong to their Specialty Breed Club (eg Westie Club of NSW)?
- ✿ Can you see the parents and where they are kept. You can't always see the Sire as they are sometimes not owned by that breeder. Some breeders don't own a male and use different males to improve their blood lines.
- ✿ Are they prepared to take the dog back or help you re-home the dog if the match doesn't work out?

To ensure that you are getting a healthy happy Westie, you can:

- ✿ Go to shows and talk to the exhibitors who are showing and ask where they bought their dog.
- ✿ Put your name on a breeders list. In the event that a puppy becomes available the breeder will contact you directly..
- ✿ Let breeders know you are willing to take an older dog when they are no longer showing or breeding from that dog.
- ✿ Think about taking a rescued Westie if there is one available (Contact one of our Rescue Co-Ordinators via our web site).

Grooming Your Westie

Westies are long haired dogs and must be groomed regularly.

They are a medium to high maintenance breed. Westies must be hand stripped for the show ring but most pet owners have their dogs clipped. They either do it themselves or use the local grooming parlour (we don't keep information on grooming parlours). Four times a year keeps them looking good but some owners like to do it more often.

They should be brushed out at least once a week with a terrier pad and a steel comb with rotating teeth to ensure that there are no knots.

They should be bathed as little possible as frequent bathing strips their skin of natural oils and in fact encourages their coats to become dirty quickly. A rub through the coat with powdered chalk (calcium carbonate) and a good brush out with a terrier pad helps to keep the coat clean. Their nails should also be clipped regularly.

On no account should Westies be bathed while they have knots as the water causes the knots to matt making the grooming experience very stressful for the dog (and the owner).

Westie Health

Like most purebred dogs, Westies can be prone to certain genetic problems, the main one being bad skin.

This can take many forms from flea allergies to skin problems passed on through their breeding lines or even diet.

Not all Westies have bad skin, if their breeder has taken care and is only breeding from lines that don't have any problems you'll never see it. Most of these problems can be controlled through diet. Some however can only be controlled through medication sometimes including steroids.

If your Westie does turn out to have a skin problem make sure your vet investigates it fully and doesn't just think that they have "Westie Skin". Sometimes just changing their diet can help it.

One of the others is luxated patella, this is a problem with their knee joints. Like skin problems this can be avoided by buying from a reputable and experienced breeder.

Some of the other things you should ask your breeder about are:

- ✿ Legg-Perthes Disease
- ✿ Hip Dysplasia
- ✿ Craniomandibular Osteopathy (CMO)

Showing your Westie

Why not think about showing your new Westie, it's a great hobby and the whole family can enjoy the days out at a show.

While we only hold two Championship shows a year there are All Breed shows on some where most weekends. These are listed on the Dogs NSW website.

Check out our web site for some basic information on how to get started and make sure that you tell your breeder that you want to show your Westie or are looking for a dog to show.

Remember that you can only show dogs that have been bred by registered breeders who have registered their litter with Dogs NSW. Make sure that you tell your breeder that you want to show your dog before you buy so that they can be registered on the Main Register.

Don't clip your puppy's coat but start gently stripping the coat from the start.

Join the West Highland White Terrier Club of NSW and our Members who show their Westies will generally only be too happy to help.