

EVALUATING COAT IN THE WHEATEN TERRIER

by Kicki Norrby



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I have been breeding for the silky “Irish” coats for 18 years and, having had the experience of seeing some 40 litters grow up, I would like to share my thoughts, discussing the most common.

and dogs with this coat don’t mat or tangle very much. It has a natural oil in it as well and doesn’t get wet through when out in the rain and dries quickly when coming back in, wet only on the surface. This

fine and very soft and silky. They are often quite white until the adult coat has grown

in. This coat mats and tangles easily with small knots forming near the skin, especially when changing from

I’ll start with the coat I feel to be correct: “the red harsh coat”. As newborns, once dry, they are red with either black stripes and mask or no black stripes or mask (self masked). The coat is not soft and shiny and it’s often very dense. You



Vanilla Vamp at 8 weeks

can hardly see the skin when moving the coat backwards. When they are 3-4 weeks the coats look like that of a Border or Irish Terrier depending on if they have black tips or not. Up to about a year of age the coat grows slowly and they often look like a lighter colored Irish Terrier, still very red, not copper as most Irish Terriers are today. The coat is not sparse. It’s very thick and short and the soft coat slowly grows in. When they are 12-18 months it starts growing rapidly and when they are 2 years the coat is matured and lovely. The hair is soft but quite thick compared to the next type. It is never white during the development stage and gets a wonderful color as an adult. This coat is very easy to brush and comb

was the coat type the Irish farmers loved because it was easy to handle after a day out in the mud. I think this coat is dominantly inherited since you get a lot of different coats breeding them together. Only once have we got a full litter with this coat. This coat grows fuller every year and is a really beautiful show coat. Well-known dogs with this coat are Geijes Kilmore, Maroc Inishkea and Villa Rosas Queve-Jumper. The next coat is much finer and sparser. I haven’t found a good name for this type of coat. Newborn dry pups with this coat are often quite dark even black with a light wheaten color nearest the skin. It is not dense and you can easily see the skin through it when parting the coat. It grows very slowly and is sparse until the dog is over 2 years of age. The hair is very



Vanilla Vamp at 10 months

puppy to adult coat. This can take over a year. The matured coat is beautiful but hasn’t the natural oil and gets soaked when caught in the rain. I think this is the coat you are talking about when you say the “Irish” coats are sparse. I believe this coat is recessive behind the one mentioned above since if you breed this coat together you never get a red harsh puppy. We normally have

one or two pups with this coat in our litters. The two above mentioned coats are always called “Irish”.



Vanilla Vamp at 3 years of age

With the “chinchilla” coat, pups are also

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often red with more or less black tips and black mask. The coat on the dry newborn pup is soft, silky and shining. It grows



Fagwen at 3 weeks

very fast and is soft and silky all the time. There is no wool in it. With this coat the hair is finer than the first but not as fine as the second. It is not as dense as the first either, but not as sparse as the second. This coat usually matures very fast with the dog ready to be shown at 18 months. It tangles a little bit more than the first but is still



Fagwen 10 weeks

quite manageable. This coat seems to have a little natural oil as well and doesn't get so soaked as the second type when out in the rain. This can be a variant of the "red harsh coat" since when we bred Tic-Tac to Maroc Na Siona, who was red and harsh as pup, we got "red harsh coats" on all pups. Examples of dogs we have bred with this coat are Villa Rosas Paddy and Villa Rosas Tic-Tac. Honeyrags Island Duke to Villa Rosa (Snorre) also produced this coat. We use to have one or two in a litter. This coat can be hard to recognize on pups if you haven't had a pup with this before since they don't always look typically "Irish" but not "American" either.

The heavy coat. As many of you have

written, there are heavy and woolly coats in the "Irish" lines. Where did it come from anyhow? I don't believe that people have mixed in other breeds as some rumors suggest. I used to call the coats that are very much like the chinchilla coat only with more or less wool in it, heavy. It usually takes a long time for the wool to go away; mostly the dog is over 3 years of age or even more. The coat then becomes silky and shiny and has more or less of the natural oil in it. This coat is very common on dogs in Sweden

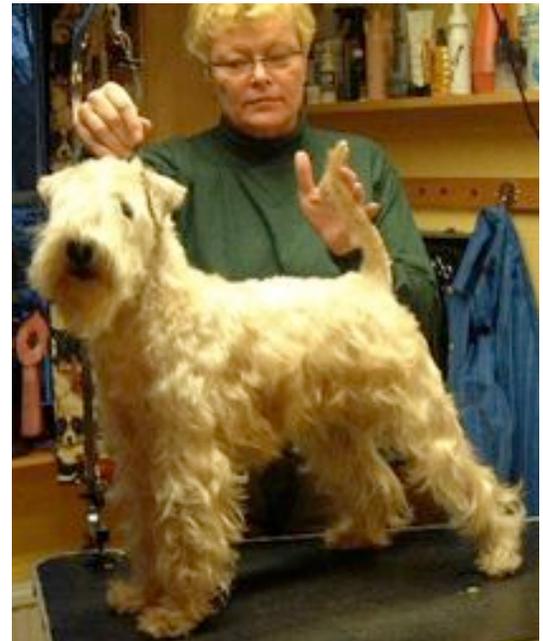
and when the wool has grown out it is beautiful. As long as the wool is there it is not correct since the FCI standard says single coat and will penalize wool, but when the wooliness is gone it's correct. A lot of "mixed" pups get this coat. When the dogs are young it's called "American". As an adult it depends on how much wool there still is. We have had pups with this coat that have cleared out the wool before they were one year, but mostly it takes longer.

The woolly coat. This coat is thick and woolly and never gets the shine or silk. It is dry and dull and soaks easily. I think I don't need to describe this more since we all know this coat. As puppies they look wonderful, like small bears. This

coat is described in the FCI standard as a disqualifying fault. Sometimes we get one or two woolly pups in our litters, but it is quite seldom. It seems that curly (kinky) silky coated dogs give woolly offspring more often than those with wavy silky coats. This is for sure called "American" here in Sweden, but I think this is unfair since I've seen so many beautiful coats in American dogs.

As you have probably understood, I like the red harsh coat best and have almost always kept the best pup in the litter with this coat for future breeding. The same when selling to other breeders; I advise them to pick the best red puppy they like. Of course the body and conformation should be good as

well, but I find it easier to breed for good conformation than for good coats. It takes many years and litters to get a litter where most of the pups have the correct silky coat since the inheritance seems so hard to understand. There are so many genes and if not line breeding you can get ten different varieties of coats in one litter. In our Q-litter for example we had nine pups with nine different coats, one red harsh, one woolly and all types of coat in between.



Fagwen at 1 year of age with Kickie

To call the silky coats "Irish" is OK for me since the breed is from Ireland and in the FCI countries you have it in the breed name as well. But to call the thick, dull and woolly coats "American" I would, as an American, take it as an insult.

It is very hard to tell from pictures the differences between the coats. It is much easier when you can put your hands in the coat, but even then it can be very hard sometimes to tell how the adult coat will be. I've had some surprises during the years so I'm not as self-assured as I was before; e.g., a perfect red/harsh puppy coat turned into a kinky (curly) almost white coat as an adult. This pup didn't show any sign at all of getting a kinky coat. A woolly pup I sold as a pet changed her coat before she was a year old into a rich just gorgeous silky coat. But these examples are more exceptions than rules. On our website (www.villarosa.se) are some photos, showing the different types of coats at different stages, (under THE BREED, and COATS❖