Congratulations on your recent acquisition of a Welsh Terrier. The Welsh Terrier Club of America (WTCA), founded in 1900, as well as several regional club affiliates, want you to know they are ready to help you in every way to enjoy your Welsh Terrier to its fullest. Knowing something of the breed’s origins will help you to better understand the breed and your own individual dog.

The Welsh Terrier is a very old breed, first mentioned in 1450 by a Welsh poet thanking the donor for a “good black and red bitch to choke the brown polecat.” These were working terriers used by Welsh farmers to rid their lands of fox, badger, rodents and other vermin, and to catch an occasional rabbit for the dinner table. From the 1700s several hunters in North Wales bred Welsh Terriers exclusively to run with packs of hounds to bolt the fox. From this we know the Welsh Terrier was not only game, but able to work alongside other dogs and horses.

When dog shows originated these rather scruffy Welsh earth dogs were tidied up for the show ring. In 1887 the Kennel Club in London recognized the Welsh Terrier for registration and the Breed Standard was written. In 1885 the first two imports to the U.S. were registered by the American Kennel Club (AKC) and were first shown in the Miscellaneous Class. Four years later, now with classes for the breed, an imported dog, Nigwood Nailer, became the first AKC Champion Welsh Terrier. Currently, an average of 32 Welsh Terriers per month are registered with the AKC.

Welsh Terrier Character

Welsh Terriers were bred to preserve their hunting instincts. However, they were also required to be steady, affectionate and easily controlled since the dogs lived with the family, played with the children, had to get along with other animals on the farm and still maintain their fearless prey-drive in pursuit of rabbit, rat or badger. “Sensible” is a word often used in describing the Welsh Terrier.

The Breed Standard calls for the Welsh Terrier to be a game dog—alert, aware, spirited—but at the same time to be friendly and show self-control. Aggressiveness or shyness are not only undesirable, but are uncharacteristic traits. He’s a good watchdog, loves people and makes himself right at home wherever home happens to be, thus older dogs change homes easily. Infants and toddlers in general do not make good dog owners, but responsible older children will find a perfect companion in a Welsh Terrier. The Welsh is playful and fun-loving, but not hyperactive. Part of his charm is to be everything at once: A happy dog, a quiet companion, a protector of hearth and home, naughty, mischievous—and endearingly apologetic. These are intelligent, sensible dogs with a desire to please.

He is a terrier, and a “desire to please” will be a desire to please himself if obedience training is not properly undertaken. This is an essential part of responsible dog ownership. Training requires patience and consistency on the part of the owner. Maintaining a sense of humor helps, too!

If your Welsh Terrier is under 6 months of age, puppy kindergarten is an excellent way to socialize him with other dogs and people, and at the same time he will learn to pay attention to you. Then comes basic obedience training. One 6-8 week session is not enough for a Welsh Terrier. Two is minimal, three is better! Train with fun, food, praise and firm determination. Welsh Terriers will not learn by rote and, because they are easily distracted by scent, sight and sound, are mistakenly thought to be stubborn. As this would indicate, they seldom become stars in obedience competition, although what they do learn they will retain for life—with gentle daily reminders, of course!

An older dog will benefit from obedience training in order to respond to you as its new owner. It will take a little time to change previous habits to your way of doing things. If you bought your Welsh as show potential, the dog still must be socialized so it will interact well with dogs in—and out of—the ring and accept being handled by a judge without problem.

Above all, the Welsh is not a breed to be bullied, forced or roughly handled. Any such abusive treatment will bring out the kind of aggression normally reserved for those rats and woodchucks.

City-dwellers rely on leashes for safety, but suburban and rural residents require a securely fenced area for their Welsh.
These are earth dogs, so adding wire fencing 6 inches below ground level will deter “escape digging” activities. Do not let your dog run free. He’s a hunter and will get into trouble. Electronic fences are not recommended due to the breed’s natural curiosity, speed, and prey drive. His focus is so intense that he won’t even notice the electronic barrier when chasing a squirrel or cat across the road. He may not notice oncoming cars either.

The other protection a Welsh Terrier needs—and wants because he is a “den” animal—is a crate. It provides a small safe place of his own that is out of bounds to all his human family. The crate is not just for sleeping, but an aid in house training, the safest spot for riding in the car, the place to be when workmen are coming and going, and a perfect spot for a “time-out.”

Explore microchipping your Welsh and AKC Reunite—the way home for lost pets.SM Available at a discount with your AKC Registration, AKC Reunite provides you and your dog with 24/7/365 lifetime protection should it ever get lost. Enrollment includes an AKC collar tag with your dog’s registration number and the AKC Reunite pet recovery service phone number. For more information see www.akcreunite.org or call 800-252-7894.

The Welsh is calm, sensible and friendly and does best when treated in a like manner with respect and understanding. He is not a baby and will only become unmanageable if you treat him as one. He is very much a dog. He prefers the country, adapts well to city life, is happy with daily walks and playtime, but will be ecstatic if given the chance to run free. He’s a hunter and will get into trouble. He will not change your dog’s personality; nor will it cause your pet to become obese or lazy. A neutered male will generally be more tolerant of other male dogs. Having a litter is not in any way beneficial to a bitch and can lead to very serious problems, even death. Spaying her may add years to her life.

The American Kennel Club permits spayed and neutered animals to participate in junior handling, all phases of obedience and other performance events, but not in conformation classes.

Breeding dogs is a great responsibility as well as a significant financial investment. To breed and raise a litter properly, it is necessary to devote round-the-clock time daily to care for, clean up after, and socialize young pups so that they reach their full potential. Veterinary care of the dam and of the pups, including tail-docking at 3 – 5 days, is further expense to be considered. Proper facilities for delivering and housing newborn pups are a must, with expanded facilities as they mature.

On top of all this, there is the essential process of finding and educating responsible new families to ensure that those puppies are never returned to you or left at a shelter. Because so much is involved in the breeding and raising of Welsh Terriers, the Welsh Terrier Club of America backs up their member breeders, all of whom sign and abide by the Breeders’ Code of Ethics.

As with all purebred dogs recognized by the American Kennel Club, there is an approved Breed Standard for Welsh Terriers which is a written description of how the ideal Welsh Terrier should look, move and behave. All responsible breeders strive to produce dogs that conform to this Breed Standard. It goes without saying that a Welsh Terrier with major deviations in appearance, structure or temperament should never be bred. A copy of the Breed Standard can be found on the WTCA website and in the book devoted to the breed, The Welsh Terrier Leads The Way (Doral) by Bardi McLennan.

Enjoy your Welsh Terrier!
Additional information on the breed, the Club and WTCARES Rescue is available on the WTCA website:

www.welshterrier.org

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