

# WHAT'S UNDER THAT COAT?

## ...AN EDUCATED LOOK AT THE SOFT COATED WHEATEN TERRIER

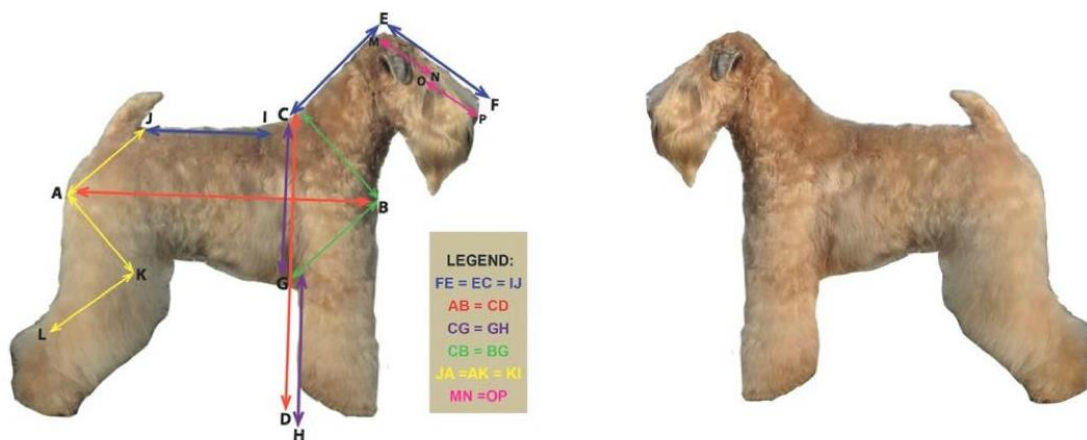
by GAY DUNLAP

**T**here's a sound and well-structured dog under that coat...or at least there should be. Can you tell visually or do you feel you must put your hands on the dog to determine its true make and shape? Certainly artful groomers can set lie to what is really under a jacket and this is true with most, if not all, coated breeds. Those of us that come from coated breeds and also know our way around with a pair of scissors are usually quite adept at spying the tell-tail signs of a dog that is little more than a hair cut. Others, not so much. Hair can hide a lot, so with this in mind, here are a few visual aids which hopefully will help in speeding up the judging process among those less familiar with "the tricks of the trade" used by handlers and other scissor-gifted exhibitors.

First, let's take a look at this well-balanced Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier. He has been artfully trimmed. His proportions appear quite correct although there are a couple of qualities that can't be immediately assessed. Is the top-line absolutely level (we have a tendency toward prominent lumbar vertebrae) and is there sufficient bend of stifle? Otherwise, everything we need to know structurally is there if we know what we are looking at. With the properly proportioned SCWT, length of head, neck and back should be equal (blue lines). Body length, sternum to pin bone, should be equal to height, withers to ground (red lines). Length of back skull should equal foreface (pink lines). Depth of body, withers to brisket, should equal length of leg, elbow to ground (purple lines). Shoulder

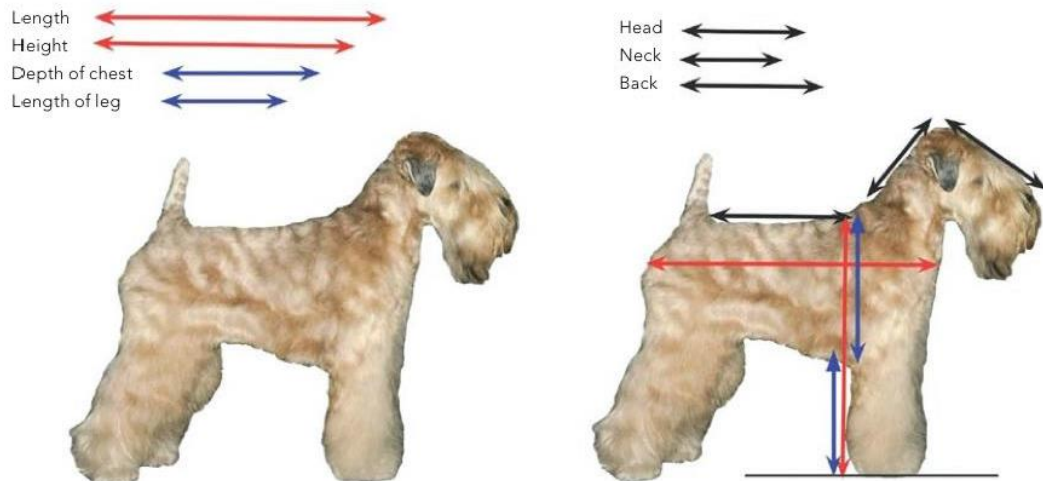
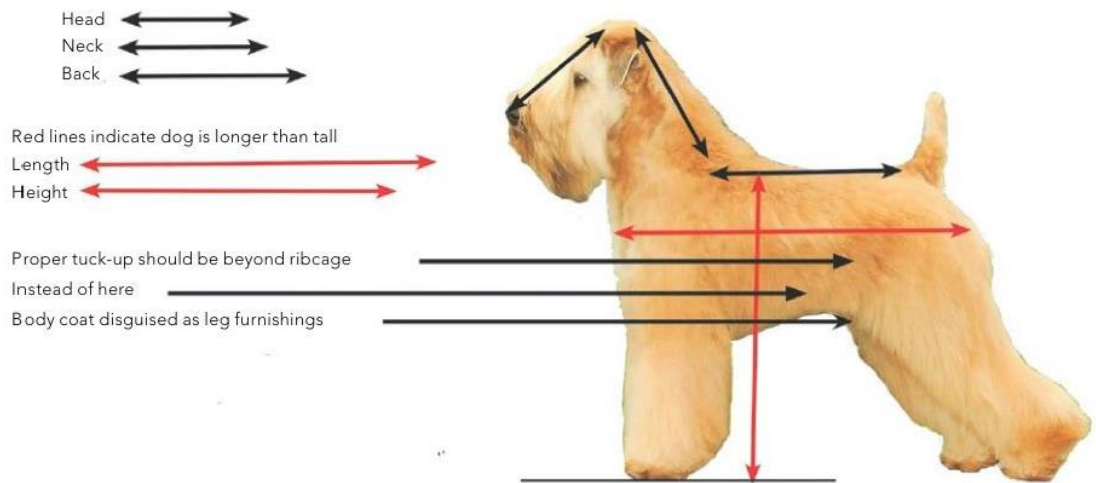
and forearm, set at a 90° angle, should be equal in length (green lines); rear angles are equal (yellow lines).

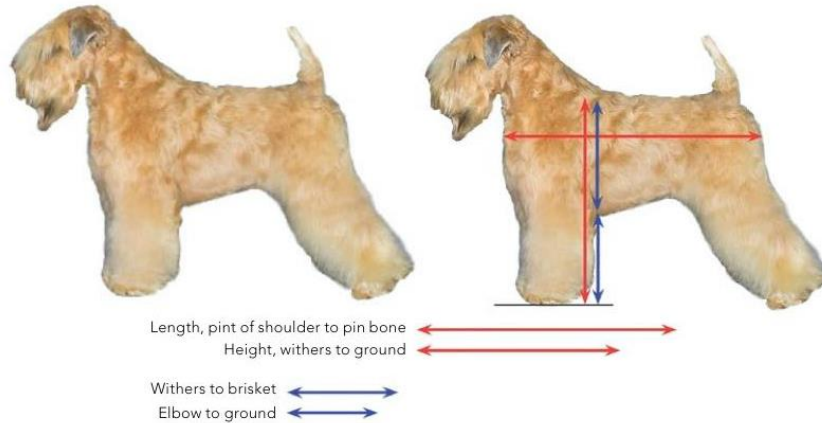
In the best of worlds, the measurements here would be equal as specified in the legend. When one considers the possible build up of coat in certain areas, the dog used in the diagram comes pretty darn close. Of course, these measurements represent perfection. Perfection, although difficult to achieve, should always be that for which we strive. He may have a slightly longer second thigh (K-L), something hard to determine under the leg furnishings. Additionally, if body depth (C-G) equals elbow-to-ground (G-H) he appears to need a tad more leg. To my eye, this dog displays beautiful breed type with pleasing balance and angles.



Let's proceed to examine other SCWT outlines in the same manner. Clever groomers have created several techniques designed to suggest a shorter back. One is to back-comb and tease hair from the lower portion of the neck, withers and part way down the back. When a dog appears to have a neck as thick as this one, it is a dead giveaway that the dog is not as short backed as one might suppose. It is also hard to determine shoulder layback under all the hair. In the same manner, build up of hair in front of the tail can easily hide a low set tail and/or croup drop-off. Excess hair on the top-skull can create the impression of both a longer head and a longer neck. The latter also makes the ear, which should be level with or slightly above top-skull, appear low set. Another ruse, designed to create a back shorter than it really is, is to bring the tuck-up further forward than the loin area and allow the side skirt behind the ersatz tuck-up to appear as leg furnishings. Based on the over-stretched rear, I would suspect a straight stifle.

Below is another dog with slightly different proportions. Obviously, head, neck and back are not equal. It is lacking sufficient neck to balance a pleasing length of head. It is also slightly longer than tall. The lack of neck would indicate an upright shoulder. Added to that, the dog is low on leg.





Here is one more example of the build up of hair over withers used to create the illusion of a shorter back, although in this case, not so successfully. The lack of balance is further destroyed by the fact that the dog is low on leg, certainly not helped by excessive coat left on the undercarriage.

Taking a brief look at the correct Wheaten head, many that we see in the ring today are thick with coarse back skulls that form a three-dimensional block (width, length, depth) instead of a neat, clean brick (narrow, long and lean). Heads tend to be square rather than rectangular. Skull and muzzle should each be rectangular, equal in length and on equal planes. Ideally, the skull is easily spanned by a woman's hand. The two photos taken from the front do not take into account the foreshortening of muzzle but hopefully project that the width of the skull should be approximately half the length of the head and, also, that the muzzle should not fall off or lose width to any appreciable degree.

It is hoped that those reading this article will be inspired to more thoughtful judging (and breeding) of the Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, understanding as well that much of it can be applied to other coated breeds, notably the Kerry Blue Terrier. ■

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Approved by the AKC to judge the Terrier and Toy Groups, Poodles, Dachshunds, Miscellaneous, Juniors and Best in Show. Ms. Dunlap bred Yorkshire Terriers briefly, followed by Soft Coated Wheaten Terriers (since 1970) under the Gleanngay prefix, with over 160 champions, including BIS, Specialty and Group winners. She bred and owned the top-producing Terrier sire of all time, Ch Gleanngay Holliday, ROM. She has judged across the US and has also adjudicated in Australia, Canada, China, Finland, Ireland and Sweden.*



*A regular contributor to numerous periodicals, she wrote the SCWT Standard Amplification and produced the SCWT Illustrated Breed Standard and Amplification, along with the SCWTCA Judges Study Guide DVD. She has also served as editor of the SCWTCA quarterly publication, Benchmarks, and as an AKC Delegate, representing SCWTCA. Additionally, she is web-master for ADSJ.*

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