

# How To Identify a Kerry Blue Terrier

A publication to help shelter personnel identify our breed

Kerry Blue Terriers can be difficult to identify in shelters because (1) they are relatively uncommon and not often seen, (2) they may be found in an advanced state of neglect giving the appearance of another breed, and (3) many of their physical characteristics are shared with other breeds. This publication is intended to help shelter personnel correctly identify our breed.

**Size:** Height ranges from 17 to 21 inches and weight from 30 to 45 lbs.

**Body structure:** The Kerry's height (at the withers) is approximately equal to its length (from chest to rear), giving it a square appearance. The Kerry is a muscular, solidly built, large terrier.

**Coat:** The nonshedding single coat is soft and wavy, ranging from silky loose waves to dense tight curls.

**Color:** Born black, puppies mature to any shade of gray from light silver to dark slate as young adults. Some Kerries re-



and long facial hair and a beard, giving the head the boxy appearance typical of a terrier. However, pets may have their facial and body hair clipped short or completely shaved off, while neglected Kerries may have long hair all over, which may be matted or corded.

**Ears:** Kerries have relatively small, drop-down ears set high on the head, terrier style. Most ears are carried forward on the head, but some may hang down hound-like, or even stand straight up (particularly in older dogs).

**Tail:** The docked tail is about 6 inches and usually carried straight up, or cocked over the back when the dog is animated.

**Temperament:** Dog aggression is common in the breed, giving the false impression in a shelter that the dog is aggressive with people. Most Kerries are friendly and affectionate with humans, and extremely people-oriented. They are typically fearless, alert, and intelligent.

main black, but medium to dark blue-gray is most common. Dark points are common on the face, tail, and feet of lighter colored dogs, while tints of tan or brown, especially on the legs, may be seen on young adults in the process of "clearing" to their adult color.

**Trim:** Properly trimmed Kerries have longer hair on the legs than the body,

**Head:** Long, but not exaggerated; flat skull, with a very slight stop, nearly flat from nose to occiput; foreface full without "cheekiness"; length of skull and foreface nearly equal. The head is "brick-like"—flat on top and on the sides. Jaws are deep, strong, and muscular.



**Tail:** Docked to approximately 6 inches, set well up on the back, and carried erect. *Variations:* May lay on the back or be carried horizontally or between the legs; some Kerries have been found undocked or with Cocker-length tails

**Back:** Short and level. *Variation:* May be long or roached

**Skin:** Pale blue

**Ears:** Small, thin, triangular; set high on the head and carried forward. *Variations:* May be "fly-away," hang down, or be held back

**Eyes:** Dark brown to dark hazel, small, almond-shaped. *Variation:* May be light or yellow

**Nose:** Black

**Mouth:** Tongue is pink, with dark spots possible; roof of mouth and gums are black to coffee-colored and may have some pink pigmentation

**Legs:** Straight in front, angular behind

**Feet:** Black toe nails

**Coat:** Dense, soft, and wavy; may be silky or cottony (*never wirey or harsh*), from curly to loose waves; color from black to slate gray, silver blue, light pearly gray

**Proportions:** Overall length from the forechest to the buttocks is approximately equal to the height at the withers. The distance from the withers to the elbow is equal to the distance from the elbow to the ground.

# Breeds Kerry Blue Terriers May Be Mistaken For

Kerry Blue Terriers, especially neglected ones, are easy to misidentify because they share many physical characteristics with other breeds, making positive breed identification difficult. Characteristics that are similar to other breeds include:

- **medium size**—Standard Schnauzer or Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier
- **soft, wavy coat**—Poodle or Portuguese Water Dog
- **gray color**—some Bouviers and Pulik
- **body structure**—Airedale, Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier, or Portuguese Water Dog
- **facial hair**—Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier or Scottish Terrier
- **1:1 height/length ratio ("squareness")**—Poodle or Puli
- **pale blue skin color**—Puli

Characteristics that are different between Kerry Blue Terriers and the other breeds are listed below.



Champion Kerry Blue Terrier



**Airedale.** Airedales are black and tan—Kerries are always gray or black. Airedales are wire-haired—Kerries are soft-coated. Airedales are tall (23+ inches) and leggy—Kerries are almost always less than 21 inches. Airedales have proportionally longer tails than Kerries.



**Bouvier.** Bouviers may weigh up to 80 lbs—Kerries weigh 45 lbs or less (unless obese). Bouviers have broad, square heads—Kerries have rectangular heads. Bouviers may have cropped ears—Kerries always have natural, drop-down ears. Bouviers have shortly docked tails—Kerries have 6-inch docked tails. Bouviers have harsh straight double coats—Kerries have soft wavy single coats. Bouviers have a length-of-skull to length-of-muzzle ratio of 3:2—Kerries have a ratio of 1:1. Bouviers are serene in temperament—Kerries are excitable.



**Poodle.** Miniature Poodles are smaller than Kerries, and Standard Poodles are larger. Poodles have large, hanging ears set at or below eye level—Kerries have small ears set high on the head and carried forward. Poodles have long, fine muzzles—Kerries have boxier muzzles.



**Portuguese Water Dog.** PWDs are slightly larger than Kerries. PWDs have webbed feet, a prominent stop, domed skull, and narrow snout—Kerries do not. PWDs have round eyes—Kerries have almond-shaped eyes. PWDs have low-set ears—Kerries have high-set ears. PWDs have low-set, undocked tails—Kerries have high-set, docked tails. PWDs are slightly longer than they are tall—Kerries are as long as they are tall.

**Puli.** Pulik are slightly smaller than Kerries, and have slightly larger eyes, shorter forefaces, and lower set ears. Pulik have broad domed skulls—Kerries have flat skulls. Pulik have double coats—Kerries have single coats. Pulik have undocked tails carried over their back—Kerries have docked tails carried erect. Pulik have medium size ears that hang—Kerries have small ears carried forward. The wavy, curly, or corded Puli coat can resemble the coat of an unkept, neglected Kerry. Pulik are often aloof with strangers—Kerries are usually outgoing.



**Standard Schnauzer.** Schnauzers may have cropped ears—Kerries have natural drop-down ears. Schnauzers have 1 to 2-inch docked tails—Kerries have 6-inch docked tails. Schnauzers have harsh, wire-haired outercoats and soft undercoats—Kerries have soft single coats. Schnauzers may be salt-and-pepper, where each strand of outercoat is banded in shades of gray—Kerries have only one color on each strand of hair. Schnauzers have bristly facial furnishings—Kerries have soft, more profuse furnishings.



**Scottish Terrier.** Scotties are short (10- inches)—Kerries are 17+ inches tall. Scotties have short legs in proportion to their body—Kerries do not. Scotties have natural prick ears—Kerries have natural drop-down ears. Scotties have hard wire-haired outercoats and soft undercoats—Kerries have soft single coats.



**Soft-Coated Wheaten Terrier.** SCWTs are always wheaten or blonde in color—Kerries are always black or gray. SCWTs have silky coats with gentle waves—Kerries have wavy-to-curly coats with more body. SCWTs have medium, relatively low-set ears that point to the ground—Kerries have small high-set ears that point to the eye. SCWTs have shortly docked tails—Kerries have 6-inch docked tails.



## Kerry Blue Rescue Dogs We've Known and Loved

**8-year-old male.** Sammy was a stray labeled a Schnauzer/Poodle mix, but later identified as a purebred Kerry based on body structure, coat, color, and temperament. Here, he looks long in back and short in leg, neck, and head, but trimmed correctly, he is actually a very beautiful Kerry.



**4-year-old male.** Finnegan had an overgrown coat, infected eyes and ears, and a bladder stone condition that required immediate emergency surgery. Kerries with overgrown coats appear to have massive heads, similar to a Bouvier's.

**8-year-old male.** Blue was turned in by his owner who claimed that his leg tumors were cancerous. Subsequent surgery and biopsies proved that claim false. Benign fatty tumors and cysts are common in Kerries.



**15-year-old male.** BJ's stance in this photo is typical of a geriatric Kerry with arthritis. Despite deafness and loss of vision, Kerries continue to enjoy life and compensate for their infirmities well into old age.

**6-month-old male.** Found as a stray, O'Riley was emaciated and suffered from mange. What coat he had left was shaved, giving him the appearance of being long in back and flat-footed. O'Riley is undocked.



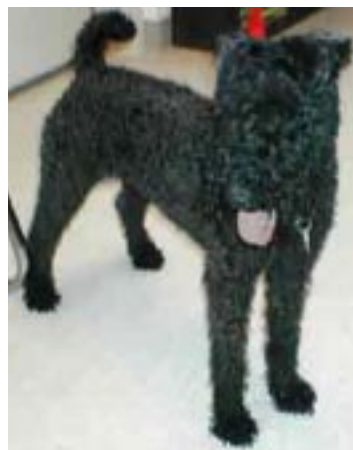
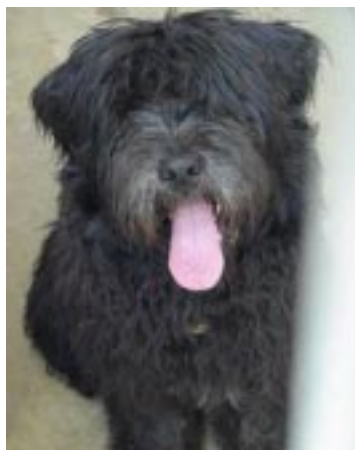
**11-year-old bitch.** Libby was shaved at the shelter because she was bristling with foxtails when found by animal control. The coat color, dark eye, shape of ear, and head structure helped identify her as a silver Kerry Blue.

**7-year old champion male.** Picked up as a stray, Mac was matted to the skin, had infected eyes and ears, and hot spots—all conditions typical in the neglected Kerry. He was identified as a Kerry for his color, structure, and movement.



**Young male.** Cash was a stray labeled a Poodle-Schnauzer mix when picked up by animal control. Although he was completely shaved, Cash was later correctly identified as a purebred Kerry Blue Terrier.

**6-month-old male.** Hopkins was listed simply as a Terrier, but his shelter paperwork referred to him as a Cocker Spaniel. Once groomed, it was obvious he was a Kerry with a typical puppy coat—soft with a loose wave. Hopkins has a dark spot on his tongue, which occurs occasionally in purebred Kerries.



**3-year-old bitch.** This girl is a purebred Kerry whose coat was clipped short all over her body when she appeared in a shelter. The way she holds her ears forward, the wide-legged stance, and the cocked tail are typical of an alert, animated Kerry.

# The Kerry Blue Terrier Foundation

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The Kerry Blue Terrier Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) public charity supporting education, health, and rescue of our breed nationwide. In our rescue effort, we take responsibility for any Kerry or Kerry mix needing a home regardless of age or health. We carefully screen all our adoptive homes using the Adoption Questionnaire at our web site and require home visits. We provide our Rescue dogs with veterinary exams, health testing, and temperament evaluations. See our web site for more information about our organization and the work we do.

## Contact:

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## Please Call Us—We Can Help!

- We are not associated with any breeder club. We are part of the solution, not part of the problem.
- We are the only independent 501(c)(3) charity dedicated to the Kerry Blue Terrier.
- We offer breed identification, advice, pickup, and payment to shelters with impounded Kerries.
- We maintain a network of responsible Kerry people nationwide who recover, vet, and foster our dogs.
- We spay/neuter every dog placed.
- We provide full medical screening and testing of every dog, and treatment of any medical condition.
- We require completion of an 8-page Adoption Questionnaire, conduct extensive interviews, and perform home checks on all adopters.
- We do follow-up on every placement and provide life-long support to every adopter.
- We will pay full adoption fees and can make a generous donation to your organization.



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