

American Water Spaniel

Family: gundog, water dog, spaniel

Area of Origin: United States

Date of Origin: 1800s

Original Function: bird flushing and retrieving

Today's Function: bird flushing and retrieving, spaniel field trials

Avg Size of male: Height: 15-18 **Weight:** 30-45

Avg Size of Female: Height: 15-18 **Weight:** 25-40

Other Name: none



Health

- Major concerns: none
- Minor concerns: lenticular opacities, CHD
- Occasionally seen: patellar luxation, PRA
- Suggested tests: (hip), (eye)
- Life span: 10 – 12 years

History

Exactly when and where, or from what the American water spaniel was developed was never recorded. Its appearance strongly suggests a smaller version of the Irish water spaniel, and it is likely that it is derived from that breed or its earlier versions, the Northern, Southern and Tweed water spaniels. The curly-coated retriever and its forebear, the English water spaniel, may also have played a role. Some theories even credit the American Indians who lived in the Great Lakes regions as the creators of the breed. Whatever its origin, the American water spaniel first became established as a recognizable breed in the Midwestern parts of the United States, where it was unsurpassed as a hunting companion. This small dog with the waterproof coat and keen nose could hunt through rough thickets, spring game and retrieve all manner of game from land and water, often marking several fallen birds before retrieving them all unflinching. Until it was recognized by the AKC in 1940, no one ever considered breeding these dogs for anything but hunting ability. Even after recognition, the breed's forte remained in the field, and it is a rarity in the show ring or even the home. Today the American water spaniel is among the least known of AKC recognized breeds, despite being one of only two sporting breeds developed in America. In fact, the American water spaniel is the state dog of Wisconsin.

Temperament

As its name implies, the American water spaniel is a natural lover of water. Not only is it a skilled retriever and versatile hunter, but it is also a tractable fun-loving family dog — as long as it gets regular physical and mental exercise. It is sensitive and willing to please. Some can be timid. Generally good with other dogs in the household, some are aggressive toward strange dogs. Barking can be a definite problem; some also whine or drool.

Upkeep

Like all hunting dogs, the American water spaniel needs daily exercise, although these requirements can be met with a long walk. The coat is oily and needs weekly brushing. Hair may be clipped from the feet and topknot. Ears should be checked regularly.

Form and Function

The American water spaniel packs a lot of ability into a comparatively small dog. Its muzzle is long and strong enough to carry a large goose, and it has strong quarters to propel it through water and over land. It is slightly longer than tall, solidly built and muscular. The coat can range from uniform waves (marcel) to close curls, with a dense undercoat. This combination provides protection against weather, water or briars. The ears are well-covered with hair, which should not grow into the ear canal. The gait is balanced, with reach and drive.