

Maryland coast, the heritage of the Chesapeake Water Dogs began.

Hunting season on the Chesapeake Bay is cold and stormy, with icy winds and strong tides. The sportsmen needed a tough retriever who could brave the bay's freezing waters repeatedly to retrieve their game birds when other breeds refused to go. These "Bay dogs" were bred with a coat texture to keep them dry, and the coat is ideally suited for the long, cold swims in rugged conditions. The dogs occasionally had to break ice to gain their birds.

This coat starts at the skin with a dense, wooly undercoat, so thick it is difficult to find the skin when it is parted. It keeps the freezing water from reaching the skin. Layered over it is a short, harsh coat. This double coat holds natural oil, much like the oil on a duck's feathers. It has a slight oily feel when examined. When a Chessie comes out of the water and shakes, he is barely damp. The coat does not hold water. Overall, the coat is short and thick, not more than an inch to an inch and a half long.

The characteristic "Chessie wave" goes down the neck, shoulder, back, and loin only. The hair on the face and legs must be short and straight. There can be feathering on the tail and rear hindquarters. There should be no wave down the sides. A curly coat that covers the whole body is a disqualification. The dog should not be confused with the Curly Coated Retriever or the Poodle. The wave can vary from loose to a light, close wave, sometimes with a kinky appearance. All these varied wavy patterns fit the standard; none are preferred.

The Chesapeake coat color encompasses all shades of brown, matching the hunting environment. The deep bitter-sweet chocolate blends with the mud banks of the bay or river, as the medium milk chocolate melds with the grasses growing along the banks, and the light-yellow "dead grass" coat disappears in the dry, dead wheat stalks and grasses of the autumn fields. Along the Chesapeake Bay in fall, sedge

grasses turns bright red, so the sedge-colored Chessie vanishes into the background. Game birds should not notice the camouflaged dog waiting with the hunter in his blind as they fly in.

There are three basic colors. *Brown* includes all tones from the darkest brown to light cocoa brown. *Dead grass* includes all the yellow hues of dead grass, from faded tan to dull straw. It can be so light as to seem almost white. *Sedge* is a red coat color, from bright Irish Setter red, to deep mahogany, to light strawberry-blond. In keeping with the camouflage theme, there can be lighter and darker shades and patterns, including masking, bridling, and saddling. Solid and self-colored dogs are preferred, but varied markings are acceptable.

Disqualifying colors are any black, and white, except for a small area on the chest and belly, the toes, and rear pad. The smaller, the better.

It is important to note that the breed's color is not particularly important. It counts for only four points in the judging scale, while the correct coat texture counts for 18 points. The double coat texture, the thick undercoat, harsh outer coat, and the oily feel are what protect the dog in the icy water. These are the significant qualities that make up that marvelous Chesapeake coat.

—Audrey Austin,
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American Chesapeake Club website:
amchessieclub.org

Curly-Coated Retrievers

Marian Morris is our guest columnist for the next two columns. She is very active in many performance activities, and she shares with us information about the new barn hunt activity offered by the AKC.

Barn Hunt Fun PART ONE

Do you enjoy doing things with your dogs? Do you enjoy watching your dogs have a really great time? Do you enjoy being around a group of congenial, supportive, like-minded

folks? If the answer to all these questions is yes, then do I have the sport for you! I'm talking about barn hunt, the fastest-growing dog sport in the United States.

Although it has only been organized for under two years, there are already over 7,000 dogs registered with the Barn Hunt Association. These include mixed-breeds and purebreds large and small, and they all love to hunt and can perform barn hunt successfully.

Barn hunt is based on the profession of itinerant rat-catchers who traveled with their dogs from farm to farm, ridding the barns and storage buildings of rats, mice, and other vermin. The basic idea of a barn hunt is for the dog to hunt for and find PVC tubes containing live rats that have been secreted among bales of hay or straw. They then indicate the rats in a manner so that the handler can tell the judge that it is, indeed, a live rat that has been found.

Barn hunt trials are held in a securely fenced area, either inside or outside, containing multiple bales of hay or straw arranged in different configurations and stacks of different heights. There are four levels of classes, with the most basic being the Instinct class and the highest level being the Masters class. As the level of class goes up, the courses become harder, with the number of bales of hay or straw increasing and thus providing many additional hiding places for the rat tubes. Another level of difficulty is provided by the fact that the number of live-rat tubes also increases as the classes become more difficult, and to complicate it further, there are also tubes hidden that contain only soiled litter, and one tube that is actually clean. The handler of the dog, who is also present in the ring, has the ultimate job of recognizing when their dog has actually found a live rat tube and must tell the judge that it is the "rat."

There are many different ways that a dog may indicate his find. Some leave no doubt that he has indeed found a rat, but some dogs are very subtle, and indications may be hard to see. The key to success is to have good communication

skills with your dog and the ability to “read” what he is telling you. There are two other components that each dog must do successfully to qualify. He must do a “climb,” which consists of getting on top of the bales with all four feet. Wide, wooden ramps are used to ensure that even the tiniest dogs will have access to the bales. The dog must also go through a tunnel made of bales, and the bale tunnel increases in length and complexity of turns as the class levels advance. The final component to your run is the fact that it is a timed event, and all these things must be done before the judge announces “time.” If any of these things are not done, or done incorrectly, there is an NQ. —M.M.

Thank you, Marian, for an excellent introduction to barn hunt. Part two will be in the next Curly-Coated Retriever column.

—Ann Shinkle, annshinkle@aol.com

Curly-Coated Retriever Club of America website: ccra.org

Flat-Coated Retrievers Separation Anxiety

The Flat-Coat is a dependent, excitable breed, very prone to separation anxiety. Whining, barking, and/or destructiveness in the absence of the owner are signs of a frustrated dog, which leads to an unhappy owner.

The key to controlling separation anxiety is to always leave the dog calmly, with a biscuit and a toy or something to do, and always return with calm control.

When returning to the crated dog, enter the room the crate is in alone (not accompanied by other pets or people) and close the door behind you. Say nothing to the dog, and busy yourself around the room for a minute or two at first, gradually longer, to get him used to waiting. Go to the crate with a collar and leash. Say nothing to the dog while you unlatch the crate door, but don't open it.

Boundary-line train your dog by opening and closing the crate door an inch or two, quickly, repeatedly, 10 or

20 times or until the dog is calmly watching. Then gradually open and close the door wider and slower. Close abruptly if the dog begins to come out and start over. When the door is fully open, put his collar and lead on as you call him out, then have him stop and sit (or stand if a show dog). Control him with as many stops and turns every few steps, both inside the room and out, until he is under control.

Speak to him pleasantly in a low, calm voice, but be careful to not allow him to touch you. Touching you will excite him as much as being played with. If you have trouble keeping him from touching you, practice left turns and circles left during training sessions, and use them whenever he is excited about you.

Don't allow any greetings with any other pets or people or affection or play from you until he has been calm for 15 to 20 minutes. This will be time consuming at first, but it will take less time in a few days and will save you a lot of time in the long run.

If you leave your Flat-Coat in the house or a room, yard, or dog run, go to rejoin him when you return, rather than opening a door or gate and letting him explode out. Walk into his area and walk past him, speaking to him pleasantly in a low voice. Have him sit for a biscuit while you put his collar and leash on, and treat him as you would when coming out of a crate. Or tease him with a biscuit or toy, and throw it to distract him.

Prevent explosive or bolting behavior when you return, and you will have a happier, healthier, less anxious Flat-Coat.

—Sally Terroux, sjterroux@aol.com

Flat-Coated Retriever Society of America website: FCRSAninc.org

Golden Retrievers Food for Thought

In the nineteenth century, as gentleman farmers and sportsmen kept breeding records of their canines and began to exhibit the best of their breeding stock, formal studbooks were established within the canine

community. When these breeds were eventually recognized by registering bodies, such as the Kennel Club in the U.K., those studbooks (with a few exceptions) were officially closed.

Today, by the definitions understood by geneticists, all breeding of purebred dogs, including those we call outcrosses and line-bred, should be considered inbreeding. When breeders speak of outcrosses, most believe that going to a bloodline without common ancestors in the previous four or five generations is bringing in new genetic material. Not so.

Historically, all of our Golden retrievers go back to Lord Tweedmouth's Nous and Belle, with most Golden retrievers going back to the famous American dog Am./Can. Ch. Speedwell Pluto. And within this confluence, over the past decade breeders have created what might be termed “genetic bottlenecks” through the “popular sire” phenomenon.

One well-known pedigree specialist in the Golden world has noted that Ch. Misty Morning Sunset appears in the pedigree of 95 percent of current show Golden retrievers, appearing as many as 500 times in a 16-generation pedigree. In field bloodlines, NAFC/FC/AFC Topbrass Cotton and AFC Holway Barty and other accomplished field-trial Golden retrievers appear in a multitude of pedigrees (along with, of course, Nous and Belle).

So while many may impugn the efforts of those who create ill-planned “doodledogs” and other mixed-breed combinations, could there not be some rationale or logic to the attempts of serious, responsible breeders to create new combinations that could postpone or even prevent genetic dead-ends? We now have the benefit of “clearance” testing and the mapped canine genome to help guide intelligent crossbreeding decisions and the possibility that new breeds might eventually be developed.

Consider the possibility that judiciously crossbreeding animals could produce healthy, trainable, long-lived, moderate-sized dogs to be ideal family companions that can thrive in condos,