
Retriever (Flat-Coated)

Origin and Purpose

The Flat-Coated Retriever was developed in England in the mid-1800's from the St. John's Dog, combined with working field setter, sheepdogs, and spaniels. It was the first of the retrievers to win widespread acclaim as a shooting dog, and at the end of the last century and the beginning of this, it was the almost universal choice of those who required a dog for formal game shooting and wildfowling. It has maintained its reputation as dual-purpose retriever over the years and there remains little or no difference between field and show Flat-Coats. Field Flat-Coats should be structurally sound and conform to the standard; conformation Flat-Coats should be physically capable of performing in the field.

General Appearance

The Flat-Coated Retriever combines substance and strength with elegance and refinement, which together with a happy and active demeanor, intelligent expression, and clean lines, have been eloquently described as power without lumber, and raciness without weediness.

The distinctive features of the Flat-Coat are the silhouette (moving as well as standing): smooth, effortless movement, head type, coat, and character. A proud carriage, responsive attitude, waving tail, and over-all look of quality, strength, style and symmetry complete the picture of the typical Flat-Coat. The Flat-Coat is a strong and elegant working retriever. Quality of structure, balance and harmony of all parts both standing and in motion are essential. As a breed whose purpose is of a utilitarian nature, structure and condition should give every indication of being suited for hard work.

In profile the Flat-Coat has a long, clean but substantial head, which is unique to the breed. It is free from exaggerations of stop or cheek and set upon a moderately long neck which flows smoothly into the well-laid-back shoulders. A level topline combined with a deep, long rib cage tapering to a moderate tuck-up create the impression of a blunted triangle. The brisket is well-developed and the forechest forms a prominent prow. The Flat-Coat is well proportioned, strong but elegant: never lacking in length of body or length of leg. The coat is thick and flat lying, and the legs and tail are well feathered.

Temperament

Character is a primary and outstanding asset of the Flat-Coat. He is a devoted family companion, a versatile working dog, sensible, outgoing and tractable.

In the field he has a great desire to hunt with self-reliance; in the show and obedience ring he demonstrates stability and a desire to please with a confident, happy and outgoing attitude (characterized by a wagging tail), and at home he is sensible, alert, and affectionate.

The Flat-Coat is a very companionable dog with a strong attachment to owner and family. To reach its full potential in any endeavor, the Flat-Coat requires a strong, personal relationship and individual attention.

Faults: Nervous, hyperactive, apathetic, shy or obstinate behavior is undesirable. Unprovoked aggressive behavior is a very serious fault.

Size

Preferred height is 23-24 inches (58-61 cm) at the withers for dogs; 22-23 inches (56-59 cm) for bitches. The Flat-Coat should be in lean, hard, condition with the preferred weight as being 60-70 lb. (27-32 kg).

Coat

Coat is of a moderate length, density, and fullness with a high luster. The ideal coat is flat lying and straight; a slight waviness is permissible. This is a working retriever and the coat must provide protection from all types of weather, water, and ground cover.

This requires a coat of sufficient texture, length and fullness to allow for adequate insulation. When the dog is in full coat, the ears, front, chest, back of forelegs, thighs, and underside of tail are thickly feathered, without being bushy, silky or stringy. Mane of longer, heavier coat on the neck extending over the withers and shoulders is considered characteristic, and may affect the appearance of the topline and forequarters.

Faults: Curly, woolly, silky or fluffy coats should be heavily penalized. Since the Flat-Coated Retriever is a dual purpose dog, feathering is not excessively long.

Trimming

The Flat-Coat is shown with as natural a coat as possible and must not be penalized for lack of trimming. Tidying of whiskers, ears, feet and tip of tail is acceptable. Shaving or noticeable barbering of neck, body coat, or feathering (to change the natural appearance of the dog) must be heavily penalized.

Colour

Solid black or solid liver.

Faults: Dogs of a yellow colour or cream colour are not desirable should not be bred from and must be excused from the show ring.

Head

Skull: The long, clean, well-moulded head is adequate in size and strength to retrieve large pheasant, duck, or hare with ease. The impression of the skull and muzzle being cast in one piece is created by the fairly flat skull of moderate breadth; and flat clean cheeks, combined with the long, strong, deep muzzle which is well filled in before and between the eyes. **Occiput** not accentuated, the skull forming a curve where it joins the neck. **Muzzle** is nearly equal in length to the skull with a gradual, slight, but perceptible stop. **Nose:** Black and large open nostrils; brown on liver-coloured Flat-Coats. **Mouth:** Lips are fairly tight, clean and dry to minimize the retention of feathers. Jaws, long and strong. **Teeth,** scissors bite preferred, level bite acceptable. Honourable scars, anywhere on the Flat-Coat, including broken and missing teeth (as long as the natural bite is evident), should not count against the dog. **Eyes** are set widely apart with brows slightly raised and mobile, giving life to the expression. Medium sized, Almond-shaped, dark brown or hazel with a very intelligent expression. Eye rims are self-coloured. **Ears** are relatively small, well set on, lying close to the side of the head and thickly feathered.

Faults: Any coarseness or weakness, down or dish-face, cheekiness, domed skulls, short or snipey muzzle. Large, round, protruding or yellow eyes, loose lower eye lid, small mouths or weak lower jaws, pendulous lips which create an incorrect square-muzzled appearance, overly large or low-set, hound-like or setterish ears. Wry, undershot or overshot bites with a noticeable gap must be severely penalized.

Neck

Moderately long, strong, slightly arched, free from throatiness, flowing smoothly into the well-laid-back shoulders.

Forequarters

Shoulder: Long, well laid back. Muscling wiry rather than bulky. Upper arm: balanced, lengthy upper arm to allow for efficient reach. Lower arm: forelegs, straight and strong with bone of good quality. **Pasterns:** strong and springy with a slight slope. **Feet:** medium sized and tight with well-arched toes and thick pads. Removal of dewclaws is optional.

Faults: Massive or overly refined bone. Pasterns upright, knuckling over, or weak.

Body

Topline strong and level. Chest deep, moderately broad with well-defined brisket and prominent forechest. Rib cage deep, showing good length from forechest to back rib (to allow plenty of space for all body

organs), and only moderately broad. The foreribs fairly flat showing a gradual spring, well arched in the centre of the body but rather lighter towards the loin. Loin strong, well muscled and at least as long as it is wide, allowing for freedom of movement and length of stride. Croup slopes only slightly; rump fairly broad and well-muscled.

Faults: Any weakness in the loin or middle back (open couplings), or an unduly short loin which restricts reach and drive are serious faults. A barrel or shallow chest, short rib cage, cobbiness or steep croup are not typical and considered faulty.

Hindquarters

Hipbone powerful with angulation in balance with the correctly angulated front. Upper thigh powerful and well muscled. Lower thigh (stifle to hock joint) long and strong. Hock joint strong, well let down; when viewed from behind, hock joint and feet turn neither in nor out. Feet tight with well-arched toes and thick pads. There are no hind dewclaws.

Tail

Fairly straight, well set on as a smooth extension of the topline and reaching approximately to the hock joint; carried happily but without curl, never much above the level of the back.

Gait

The Flat-Coat viewed from the side covers the ground efficiently and movement appears effortless and well coordinated. Front legs move forward with a long reaching action. Hindquarters reach well forward and well back in achieving a long stride in balance with the front movement. Topline appears strong and supple while dog is in motion. Viewed from front or rear the legs should turn neither in nor out, nor should the feet cross or interfere with one another.

Faults: A choppy, short, mincing or ponderous action. Movement impeded by any structural weakness or twisting of joints.