



Flatcoated Retriever  
Society

# EXTENDED BREED STANDARD

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PRODUCED BY BECKY JOHNSON ON BEHALF OF THE  
FCRS GENERAL COMMITTEE 2013



The purpose of this booklet is to assist judges in understanding the breed standard laid down for Flatcoated Retrievers.



*A dual purpose dog - photo courtesy of Nick Ridley.*



*A dual purpose bitch - photo courtesy of Fran Robb.*



# Breed Standard

## General appearance

A bright, active dog of medium size with an intelligent expression, showing power without lumber, and raciness without weediness.

The first thing one must appreciate about the Flatcoated Retriever is that he is a medium-sized dog, moderate, workmanlike and totally free from exaggeration. He is neither heavy nor coarse, cobby nor compact, nor is he flashy. He should not look like an Irish Setter or a Golden Retriever. Everything should be in moderation. Think about the job he was bred to do. Form follows function. He is not however a plain dog. He should have a look of class about him – he has the appearance of a member of the aristocracy.

*A typical male showing excellent breed type.*



*Photo courtesy of A V Schmidt.*





Photo courtesy of Bethan Williams, Trebetyyn Photography

*Well balanced bitch  
showing excellent breed  
type.*

## Characteristics

Generously endowed with natural gundog ability, optimism and friendliness demonstrated by enthusiastic tail action. Flatcoats are known for their enthusiasm and exuberance. He has a natural desire to please with a very outgoing personality.

## Temperament

Confident and kindly. Flatcoats are renowned for their good temperaments. Any sign of aggression or nervousness is not typical of the breed and should be penalised.

## Head and Skull

Head, long and nicely moulded. Skull, flat and moderately broad with a slight stop between eyes, in no way accentuated, avoiding a down or dish-faced appearance. Nose of good size, with open nostrils. Jaws: long and strong, capable of carrying a hare or pheasant.

The Flatcoat head is unique to the breed, often referred to as a 'one piece head'. The foreface is not square but tapers from stop to nose the latter of which should have a blunt end. It is sometimes said that when viewed from above it should resemble a smooth 'wedge', rather than



two blocks stuck together. However we have to be clear on the head shape. A Curly Coated Retriever has a more triangular wedge whereas the Flatcoat has a longer wedge with a blunt end. If the head resembles any other breed it is untypical.

The cheeks should be flat and clean with no sign of chiselling beneath the eyes. Any chiselling would give the head a 'golden retriever' appearance. The head should be particularly well filled beneath the eyes to prevent any 'fall away'. The upper line of the foreface should merge gradually into the skull with a slight upward incline to show a slight stop between the eyes. If this is too defined it will give the appearance of a 'two piece head'.

Between the eyes is fairly well-filled transversely with bone, in fact the eyes are set fairly wide apart, slightly in the side of the head but not so obliquely placed as in the Collie, and definitely not forward placed. There should be no occipital protuberance. The skull should be flat and moderately broad with no sign of coarseness. Excessive width here destroys the exquisite moulding of the Flatcoat head at its best. If the skull is too broad he will resemble a Labrador, and a skull that is too narrow will resemble a Setter. The skull and muzzle should be approximately the same length. The muzzle should have a good depth – remember he has to carry game over long distances. A fine muzzle gives a 'snipey' appearance to the head which is also incorrect and gives the appearance of a Collie.

*Below left  
Classic bitch head.*

*Below right  
Classic dog head.*



*Photo courtesy of Val Jones*



*Photo courtesy of B Jones*



## Eyes

Medium size, dark brown or hazel, with a very intelligent expression (a round prominent eye is highly undesirable). Not placed obliquely.

The expression of the Flatcoat is one of twinkling intelligence - even a hint of naughtiness and therefore a light eye will completely ruin this effect. A light eye will give a hard expression which is untypical of the breed.

It should be noted that a liver coloured dog will have a naturally lighter eye but this will blend with the colour of the dog if the shade is correct. The eye shape is important – it should be medium sized and almond shaped. Round, full or loose eyes should be penalised. They should be wide enough apart as not to take away from the character of the head.

*Correct eye shape  
and colour.*



*A round eye.*



*A light eye.*





## Ears

Small and well set on, close to side of head.

The ears should be in proportion to the size of the head. An ear which is too small and set too high will give the dog a 'Collie' appearance, whereas if it is set too low he will look 'Settary'. Ears that are too big will also detract from the head shape.



## Mouth

Jaws strong with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite, ie: upper teeth closely overlapping lower teeth and set square to the jaws. Teeth sound and strong.

A scissor bite is much preferred although a level bite is acceptable. An undershot mouth should not be rewarded. It is acceptable that a tooth can become misplaced and if it is obvious that the rest of the mouth is correct this should not be unduly penalised especially in an older dog.

## Neck

Head well set in neck, the latter reasonably long and free from throatiness, symmetrically set and obliquely placed in shoulders, running well into the back to allow for easy seeking of trail.

A neck that is throaty will detract from the whole appearance of a racy outline. It should be strong and slightly arched for ease of seeking a trail and retrieving game. The coat and feathering on the neck is to protect him when working in heavy cover and therefore should never be stripped out – only discreetly tidied. Stripping out of the neck feathers should be penalised as it destroys the correct shape of the Flatcoated Retriever as well as leaving him without his natural protection.

*A correct ear - small and well set - close to the head.*



## Forequarters

Chest deep and fairly broad, with well defined brisket, on which elbows should move cleanly and evenly.

The shoulder blade and upper arm should be of the same length and meet at an angle of about 90° thus forming an imaginary right angled triangle from the wither to the point of shoulder, down to the elbow and back up to the wither. The elbow should sit snugly against the brisket - allowing ease of movement against the ribcage. As a general rule you should be able to fit your hand between the elbow and the brisket comfortably but without being able to wave it about.

*Correctly angulated forequarters.*



If brisket is shallow the elbows will have nothing to work against. When viewed from the front the chest should have sufficient width and depth.

You should be able to put your hand comfortably between the front legs. The front legs should be straight and strong with quality bone. They should not appear to come out of the same hole.

Correctly angulated forequarters which taking a line from the wither down to the point of shoulder then down to the elbow and back up to the wither give the impression of a right angled triangle.

Forelegs straight, with bone of good quality throughout. These should be well-boned, straight down to a well developed pastern with a slight slope down to strong medium sized feet. The quality of the bone of the legs is oval rather than round with the width being seen from the side and not the front. Having said that in assessing the bone shape – the oval should be more of an oblong oval rather than a circular oval which is where the term “flat bone” arises from. The bone should be of quality.

*This picture illustrates lack of forehand angulation with a shoulder that is upright, an upper arm that is short and elbows that are not tight to the brisket.*



Coarse bone detracts from the aristocratic appearance of the dog. Weak bone would suggest lack of quality. He has to withstand a day's work in the field. Remember – form follows function.

## Body

Fore ribs fairly flat. Body well-ribbed up showing a gradual spring and well arched in centre but rather lighter towards quarters. Loin short and square. Open couplings are highly undesirable.

The body of the Flatcoat is unique amongst retrievers because of shape, depth and balance. The length of the body must come from the rib cage and should be measured from the front of the prow to the last rib. The first four fore ribs are fairly flat which allows the elbows freedom of movement. Then moving to a gradual spring before tapering slightly towards the hindquarters. He does not have a barrelled rib cage like a Labrador, however he is broader than an Irish Setter. If the fore ribs are too barrelled this will push out the elbows and the forward action will be hampered. The rib/loin proportion should be roughly 80/20.

The loin must be short and open couplings must be severely penalised. A long loin will weaken the back and render the hindquarters deficient. Think of the loin as the 'tow bar' between a car and a trailer. If a tow bar is short and strong the trailer can follow straight behind the car. If the tow bar is long the trailer will weave around behind the car and the car will end up doing all the work and the trailer will hamper it.



*Open couplings are highly undesirable.*

## Hindquarters

Muscular. Moderate bend of stifle and hock, latter well let down. Should stand true all round. Cow hocks highly undesirable.

It is important again to remember moderate. The Flatcoat should not have an overly long second thigh as this will cause him to be over angulated behind. He should stand square and not with his hocks well out behind him.



## Rear angulation

A dog with overly long stifles will not be able to stand naturally with a level topline and will slope from withers to croup and on the move he will appear to have a roached back. Whereas this may be acceptable in some breeds it is not acceptable in Flatcoats. Viewed from behind he should be totally square hock to heel.

Cow hocks and over angulated hindquarters should be severely penalised as should straight stifles.



*Correct rear angulation.*



*A straight stifle.*



*Over-angulated hindquarters.*



*Correct, well padded feet.*

## Feet

Round and strong with toes close and well arched. Soles thick and strong.

As with any working dog good feet are essential. Flatcoat feet should be round and well padded, neither too big nor too small. They should not be flat, long or splayed.





*Correct tailset: short, straight and well set on, gaily carried, but never much above level.*



*Tailset too low, with sloping croup.*



*Tailset too high, the croup is too flat.*

## Tail

Short, straight and well set on, gaily carried, but never much above level of back.

This should flow straight from the croup. However the set should not be on a level with the croup or the tail carriage would be too high when the dog is in motion. It should be straight and of a length proportionate to the dog. If the set is too high or too low it will detract from the overall balance of the dog. It should be carried on a level with the back. Tails that are carried too highly detract from the smooth outline of a Flatcoat in motion.



## Gait/Movement

Free and flowing, straight and true as seen from front and rear.

Viewed from the side the Flatcoat covers the ground efficiently. It should be balanced, free flowing and well co-ordinated, never choppy, mincing, ponderous or flashy. Front reach well forward and extend well back achieving a good open side gait. The topline should appear level, strong and supple whilst the dog is in motion. Viewed from front or rear the legs should neither turn in nor out, nor should the legs cross or interfere with each other. In assessing length of stride first recall the forehand construction of the dog standing with the right angle from the wither to the point of shoulder, down to the elbow and then back up to the wither. In motion this triangle is inverted and therefore should be from the elbow, up to the tip of the nose, in a straight line down to the leading front foot and back up to the elbow. If the line from the nose to the leading foot is not perpendicular then the dog is short of stride.

Movement demonstrating reach and drive - note how the line from the tip of the nose is level with the front foot and that offside foreleg and offside hind land in the same spot whereas the nearside back leg has the equivalent reach as the nearside foreleg.

*Movement showing  
reach and drive.*



Photo courtesy of B Johnson



## Coat

Dense, of fine to medium texture and good quality, as flat as possible. Legs and tail well feathered. Full furnishings on maturity complete the elegance of a good dog.

As a working retriever his coat must provide protection from all types of weather, swimming and also heavy cover such as brambles, thistles and thorns. A coat of sufficient texture, length and fullness to do this job of work is required. A fine silky coat will not achieve this nor will a coat which is too woolly. The coat should almost have a 'jacket like' quality with good density and fullness. Nor should he be over endowed with feather as this will impede his progress whilst working in cover. The recent fashion of stripping/shaving the neck out to presumably enhance the outline or give an appearance of a 'front' is totally alien to breed type and should not be rewarded. Tidied yes, barbered never.



*Here the neck is over trimmed losing the natural look.*

## Colour

Black or Liver only.

*A correctly presented Flatcoated Retriever.*



*Photo courtesy of Gill Smitherman*



## Size

Preferred height

Dogs	58-61 cms (23-24 ins)
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Bitches	56-58 cms (22-23 ins)
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Preferred weight in hard condition

Dogs	27-36 kgs (60-80 lbs)
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Bitches	25-32 kgs (55-70 lbs)
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Much is written about size and it has to be understood that the standard calls for a preferred height rather than one which is mandatory. It is important to judge the dog as a whole and a Flatcoat who has excellent breed type and construction should not be unduly punished if he is a little outside the desired preferences.

## Faults

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog and on the dog's ability to perform its traditional work.

## Note

Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.



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Becky Johnson, August 2013

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