

Extended Breed Standard for the Flatcoated Retriever

History

The Flat coated Retriever was developed in the 1800's by crossing several established breeds including the Irish setter, Labrador and Water Dog and the St. Johns' Newfoundland, though one source also mentions the Collie. The breed became popular in Britain amongst the Game keepers due to its excellent working ability. Due to two World Wars there was a decline in numbers despite a small group of dedicated breeders maintaining the viability of the breed, until the return of many Game keepers from World War Two. Since then numbers have steadily increased. The Flat-coated Retriever deserves more attention as he is not only an excellent bird dog and swimmer but also an outstanding family dog. These dogs are gifted with a fine intuition and excellent sense of smell. The Flat coated Retriever is used above all for retrieving on plains and in thick areas of trees and bushes. They are good swimmers and also work well in marshy areas.

Sportsmen began to feel a need for a specialist retrieving dog during the 1800's with the advent of firearms, because until the birds were shot in flight there were very few birds lost. Prior to this game had been found and flushed by spaniels and secured by hawks, or located by setting birds and then drawing a net over them.

In the mid 1800's as different breeds were being developed there was great interest in the retrieving potential of a black coated dog in discovered Labrador. The dog which must have orientated in Europe was re-introduced to Britain, a natural water dog free from the susceptibility of ear canker common in spaniels. These dogs came with a reputation for excellent retrieving skills and great intelligence; these dogs were commonly called spaniels. It is thought these dogs from Labrador were crossed with the English setter or Black setter to produce the Wavy coated retriever later renamed the Flat-coated Retriever.

In 1905 Flat coated Retrievers had separate classification at Crufts for the first time. There was an entry of 18 dogs.

Temperament

This good-natured intelligent breed loves making friends. With its stable temperament, the flat coated retriever makes an excellent family dog and loves being around children. They have a puppy-like demeanour throughout their lives. The Flat Coated Retriever is quiet indoors and very active outdoors.

Outside they are active and full of fun. A properly bred Flatcoat should be energetic, but not hyper. Inquisitive (make that nose) as bright as a button, responsive and easy to train

They are entertainers, jesters, full of mischief and fun. Slow to mature: - some never actually appear to, which is why they are often called the Peter Pan of the gundog group.

Upkeep

This active dog needs daily exercise and fun, and especially enjoys the chance to hunt or swim. This is a family-oriented dog that does best when allowed to live inside and play outside. Its coat needs only weekly brushing and little, if any, minor trimming occasionally.

This wonderful, happy breed is one that wants to be involved in your life, they need close interaction with members of the family, definitely not a breed to be kennelled or left in a run. They are at their happiest spending their days beside you taking part in what ever activity you may be doing. A fast growing, large breed as a youngster exercise is best kept to a minimum attending puppy socializing classes and or obedience classes will keep them happy and active. They are a breed that likes to use its brain, whether it's in obedience, agility or, tracking and trialling. A bored and lonely Flatcoat is a very sad Flatcoat. Minimal brushing and trimming will keep this breed neat and tidy.

General Appearance:

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

The Flat coated retriever is a versatile family companion, a happy, active dog with an intelligent expression and clean lines: "Power without lumber and raciness without weediness".

Moving and standing there should be the distinctive silhouette that says Flatcoat Retriever, there should be no tendency towards another Retriever breed, it is the one thing that separates a Flatcoat from other retrievers a very distinctive and practical outline.

A gently flowing effect: where all parts mould into one, giving the impression of a dog full of energy and life. Effortless movement, correct head type, correct coat and character. Well balanced, strong, elegant, never cobby, short legged or rangy. The coat is thick and short lying. A proud carriage, strength, style and symmetry complete the Flat coated Retriever. Judge this breed on the move on a loose lead, and standing naturally.

Characteristics:

Generously endowed with natural gundog ability, optimism and friendliness demonstrated by enthusiastic tail action.

A confident, outgoing temperament, combined with responsiveness and bid ability. A happy, active dog, never coarse. A Flatcoat is never cobby in build. Should be shown in lean hard condition, free of excess weight. They are a good natured optimistic dog inclined to be happy to all.

Temperament:
Confident and kindly.

Temperament is of greatest importance: confident, outgoing, with responsiveness and bid ability, extremes of temperament: nervousness, hyperactivity and aggression are not typical and should be regarded as faults.

Head and Skull:

The head should be long and nicely moulded. The skull flat and moderately broad. There should be a depression or stop between the eyes, slight and in no way accentuated, so as to avoid giving either a down or a dish-faced appearance. The nose of a good size, with open nostrils. The jaws should be long and strong, with a capacity of carrying a hare or pheasant.

Head must be correct in its proportion. A long clean well moulded head of good size and balance. The impression should be of a skull and muzzle cast in one piece this impression is created by the combination of a fairly flat skull (this can be determined by holding down the ears) of moderate breadth and flat clean cheeks - coupled with a long strong deep muzzle well filled in before , between and beneath the eyes . The length of muzzle should be at least equal in length from the occiput to the stop, a gradual, barely perceptible stop. There is a stop - not a straight line, so the stop is visible but not accentuated. The end of the muzzle should have depth as well as breadth: the muzzle holds the nasal bones and the mucus membranes that line them contain the nerve endings which register scent. Flatcoat should have reasonable tight lips too much flesh here will prevent the clean pick up of game and the feathers will have the tendency to be retained to the dogs discomfort.

Nose: of a good size: with widely opening nostrils for scenting. The colour is black or Brown depending on the colour of the dog.

Bite :A strong jaw is essential The upper teeth should fit tightly just over the lower teeth.

Eyes:

Should be of medium size, dark-brown or hazel, with a very intelligent expression (a round, prominent eye is a disfigurement) and they should not be obliquely placed

Eyes are set wide apart .Medium sized and almond shaped dark brown or hazel not large round or yellow, an overly dark eye detracts from the kindly expression. Note: a liver will often have a lighter eye than the blacks; eye rims should be self coloured and tight. The eyes are horizontally placed but not oblique. Set more laterally than other retrievers gives a wider but a flatter field of vision. A round prominent eye is totally foreign to the breed. The expression is important and should be kindly and intelligent.

Ears:

Should be small and well set-on, close to the side of the head.

Relatively small, well set on lying close to the side of head and thickly feathered. Approx 11-14cm in length, they need to be in proportion and balance with the whole dog. It is important that the ears blend well into the neck - so that they are not intrusive to the eye.

Neck:

The head should be well set in the neck, the latter should be long and free from throatiness, symmetrically set and obliquely placed in shoulders running well into the back to allow easy seeking for the trail.

The neck is strong and slightly arched for retrieving strength, moderately long. The coat on the neck is left untrimmed, only tided. An overlong neck in a Flatcoat is incorrect as it relates to a weakness overall but a short neck is just as undesirable, the neck should carry the head well and there must be a good angle, slope and balance to the shoulders. The neck must be muscular to allow for carrying game.

Forequarters:

The chest should be deep and fairly broad, with a well-defined brisket, on which the elbows should work cleanly and evenly. The legs are of the greatest importance, the forelegs should be perfectly straight, with bone of good quality carried right down to the feet and when the dog is in full coat the legs should be well feathered.

The chest needs to have depth and width to accommodate the heart and lungs. A well defined brisket is very significant to the breed; this gives the shape to the front of the Flatcoat. The hook of the sternum can be felt and also seen in profile, it is a physical feature and not a fluff of hair. The term prow is descriptive and apt. Elbows should fit tight against the body. The front legs straight well boned and strong with hard oval bone. Leading down to strong well developed pasterns with a slight slope.

Body:

The fore-ribs should be fairly flat, showing a gradual spring and well-arched in the centre of the body, but rather lighter towards the quarters. Open couplings are to be ruthlessly condemned. The back should be short, square and well ribbed up.

Body and proportions are essential. The body of a Flatcoat is unique amongst the Retrievers because of its shape depth and balance. A well made brisket goes hand in hand with a depth of chest: providing plenty of heart room. You should find flatness where the forequarters lie against the rib cage - just after the elbows the ribs show a gradual spring of rib, being well arched in the centre of the body but lighter towards the loin: tapering off slightly giving a tuck up. Strong loins are essential as is the close coupling. The rib cage is fairly wide (but not as broad as a Labrador) emphasis should be on length and depth - it is this coupled with quality muscled shoulders gives the Flatcoat the racy appearance.

“Weediness” describes a type of undesirable rib structure this would indicate a narrow or slab sided chest one lacking in brisket and depth - these dogs will lack stamina, **“lumber”** is the opposite when a dog is heavy in depth and width of body: leading to a coarse shoulder - often steep and short.

Open Coupling: Long and weak leading to structural weakness which is detrimental to the breed: Too short of a coupling will also be detrimental; leading to loss of freedom of movement. The words cobby and compact are totally wrong and should never be applied to a Flatcoat. The croup should be well muscled and sloping downwards towards the tail. The steeper the angle the lower the tail set which destroys the lines of the dog and hinders hind action with a lack of propulsion from the limbs

Hindquarters:

Should be muscular. The stifle should not be too straight or too bent, and the dog must neither be cow-hocked nor move too widely behind; in fact he must stand and move true on legs and feet all round. The legs should be well feathered.

Well balanced with the rest of the body: hindquarters should be well muscled. A **moderate** bend of stifle gives the ability for drive when moving. The upper and lower thighs should be almost equal; however the lower thigh may be slightly longer. Hock joints strong and well let down. When viewed for behind the hock joint and feet should turn neither in or out. Cow hocks are to be highly undesirable. A Flatcoat with good structure and balance stands naturally with their weight distributed at the four corners of their body.

Feet:

Should be round and strong with toes close and well arched, the soles being thick and strong

Round and well knuckled. Pads must be deep and closely knit. Thin loose pads which splay are vulnerable to damage and cannot stand up to hard work.

Gait:

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

The dog needs to cover the ground economically. The shoulder and upper arm aid the forward extension with the hindquarters pushing off strongly : so the dog covers the ground easily and with economy of effort , without wasted movement or choppiness, movement should be straight and true whilst maintaining a level top line. A strong, elegant cheerful working retriever. The Flatcoat should be gaited at a moderate speed on a loose lead.

Tail:

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

The tail should flow from the croup. Straight and well set on, not too long. Gaily carried but not much above the level of the back. The Flatcoat should not be heavily feathered like a Golden Retriever or thin and flaggy like the setters.

Enthusiastic tail action - a Flatcoat with their tail down in the ring is a sad sight. The ever wagging tail epitomises the happy personality of the breed.

Coat:

Should be dense, of fine quality and texture, flat as possible.

Coat of fine to medium texture and of good quality and as flat as possible, although a slight wave is permissible. The coat must provide protection from all types of weather, keeping them warm in wet weather and when swimming, also protecting them from sharp objects; thistles and brambles. Look for a coat with sufficient texture and length. Protection is also provided by the feathering provided on the back of the legs and the underside of the body and the tail. Although there is no mention of an undercoat The Flatcoat does have one, although you can see its white skin when you open up the coat.

Shown with as natural coat as possible: look for a coat that is clean and well brushed. Tidying of ears, feet, underline and tip of tail is acceptable , severe barbering or shaving of the head should be severely penalised : this creates a different look to the character and the outline of the Flat coated Retriever is destroyed .

Colour:

Black or liver.

Weight and Size:

Should be between 27.2 and 31.8 kg (60 - 70 lb).

Preferred weight: Dogs 28-36kg. (60-80lbs) Bitches 25-32kgs (55-70lbs)

Preferred height: Dogs 58-61cms (23-24") to withers Bitches 25-59cm (22-23") to withers

A medium sized dog.

Note:

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

To close always bear in mind the history and the purpose for which this delightful breed was bred for. Form and function, a true multi purpose Retriever .