

Color is only 4 points on the scale of points and the fault should be applied accordingly.

The standard says, *The color of the coat and its texture must be given every consideration when judging on the bench or in the ring.* The color is a contributing factor when evaluating coat. So while color in itself is only judged as 4 points, while judging coat is 18 points, one must consider the color pigments that contribute to coat quality.

Comments are welcome. —*Nathaniel Horn*; kcboy0@yahoo.com

Curly-Coated Retrievers

Pat Stearns is our guest columnist this month and is sharing her challenging experiences with us when recently breeding her bitch.

Challenges of Curly Breeding

I have been in the breed for about 15 years. I co-bred my first litter about six years ago. That was the easy part as my co-breeder is an experienced breeder and did 99 percent of the work. We watched the pups grow, checked their overall health, and I felt it was a success. After much consideration, I decided to breed my bitch on my own. I received all the required health clearances; did blood work to ensure that she was healthy, and started researching compatible stud dogs. I was interested in dogs that had equally good health clearances, good conformation, good temperaments, and attributes I thought would complement my bitch. I researched the pedigrees of both dogs to ensure I did not see any *hidden* maladies that could creep into my breeding program.

When my bitch came into season, I decided to go with the best reproduction vets in our region. After speaking with them, we thought that transcervical would give me the greatest chance for my bitch to conceive. I also decided to try a duel-sired litter, meaning that I used the sperm from two stud dogs. This gets a bit complicated since all dogs must have DNA testing performed. Once the pups are born, they

must get a permanent mark and also be DNA tested to determine the sire. I wanted to see what my bitch would produce, and this was my best option. If she missed conceiving, I would have another opportunity to try again.

After progesterone tests and *Bruce* tests, the stud dogs "goods" arrived. Their sperm count and motility were excellent and the timing was right. We were able to perform three separate transcervical breedings. This is a process that is not for the faint of heart. It was tough on my bitch. I waited the four weeks for my first ultrasound, convinced that all went well and we were going to see pups. You can imagine my disappointment to find out she was not pregnant.

After further testing there was not a medical or scientific reason for my bitch not to conceive. The stress of the entire process may have been too much for her. This was the only logical conclusion, since scientifically we did everything "right."

My lesson is to trust nature next time. I expect my bitch to come into season within the next few months. When she does, I plan to drive 1,700 miles to the stud dog and let nature take its course. One note: I did have tests done to check my bitch's ovaries and thyroid. All is in good working condition. So a road trip is in order and love will be in the air. —P.S.

Thanks, Pat, for sharing a most interesting article with us. —*Ann Shinkle*; annshinkle@aol.com

Flat-Coated Retrievers

Our guest columnist is Karen Peterson, who has had Flat-Coats since 1988 and does fieldwork with her dogs. She serves as co-chair of the FCRSA field committee.

In Memory of Sardou

CH. ARTIC SUN'S HOT TAMALE BABY, UD, MH, MX, MXJ, QAA, WXC
JUNE 26, 1998–JANUARY 4, 2011

For over 12 years, I relied on her companionship and depths of stellar sweetness, and there's so much I could

write about her. What I want most to tell is a particular fond memory of a hunting trip.

Several years back, on a cold day in November, we took Sardou to the lovely grounds of Halter Wildlife Preserve, on the Wisconsin border. My husband and two friends made up the shooting party. (I prefer to focus on the dog handling.) There was also the guide, disgruntled that we intended to use my dog instead of his. He'd never seen a Flat-Coat before, and he eyed Sardou with suspicion. I made a deal, to placate him, that we'd bring his dogs out when mine got tired.

The cover was thick and waist-high, not yet pushed down by snowfall, but the grounds were lavishly planted with pheasant and Hungarian partridge, and Sardou had a fine time. The guns shot almost as many birds as they missed, and Sardou made some two dozen retrieves in the first three hours. The guide had to allow that she knew what she was doing, and that she didn't seem to be getting tired. He asked again what breed she was. Magnanimously, I told him he could bring his dogs out to work with Sardou for the last hour.

They were brought out on a four-wheeler, two German Shorthairs and a Lab. Sardou had never hunted with pointing dogs before, and I was fascinated to see the natural way she fell into working with the young male Shorthair—they even backed each other, in an informal sort of way. But when the Lab flushed a rooster, dropped by the guns into a pond, all Sardou's honoring manners fell by the wayside, and she beat the Lab into the pond.

My proudest moment came when we were walking in—the hunters, carrying their guns open and empty, and engaged in comradely male conversation, and the dogs loping along, still following their noses. Sardou began to lag behind the other three, and I lagged with her. So I was the only one to notice when she got birdy and froze in front of a patch of tall dry stalks. I told her to go hunt 'em up, and she went diving in, then came out with a broken-winged hen pheasant. Ever a