

Britnys are some of the best, if not the best, bird dogs of the pointing breeds. If we judge puppies based on run alone, we risk losing what is most important in our breed: the instinct to hunt.

—Martha Greenlee,  
greenlee@touchva.net

American Brittany Club website:  
[clubs.akc.org/brit](http://clubs.akc.org/brit)

## Pointers

Our guest columnist is breeder-judge Mr. Thomas Bradley III

### Tom Bradley on Pointers

A good Pointer when he enters your ring has a bit of an attitude—a little bit of arrogance—with his head held high and his nostrils large and flared. A good Pointer is moderate in size, not too big and overdone, not too refined. From the tip of his somewhat upturned nose to the tip of his shortish tail, he fits. He has good balance. He is in proportion.

I judge good Pointers on the premise that shorter is always preferable to longer—*everywhere*. Shorter in muzzle is better than longer. Shorter-backed is better than too long. Shorter loin is much better than too long. Shorter ears are way better than too long, and they should be somewhat pointed—never round—with thin, almost see-through soft leather. Not Foxhoundlike—not ever!

Our standard says that the tail is “Heavier at the base, tapering to a fine point. Length no greater than to the hock.” I find this to be fairly self-explanatory. You would be amazed at those who miss this point. It does not mean that the tail must come to the hock. It means what it says: “no greater than to the hock.” Again, a shorter, or “bee-sting,” tail is better than a long tail, and it will likely be straighter. Long gives a multitude of problems. They hang, as in an unhappy Bloodhound or, as they are often set on too high or level, they curl—or worse, stick straight up at 12 o’clock. All are equally offensive.

The standard says, “Croup falling only slightly to the base of the tail!”

This clearly means that the croup falls off “only slightly to the base of the tail.” The tail therefore should not come off level with the back.

As he stands there, the picture of what you believe to be a good Pointer, you become concerned about his topline—it isn’t level. Well, good! It isn’t supposed to be. If it were, he couldn’t do the job he was bred to do. The standard says, “slight rise from croup to the top of the shoulders. Loin of moderate length, powerful and slightly arched.” This “slightly arched” gives him his powerful drive and the ability to do his work effortlessly for hours on end.

So, now we have a moderate-sized dog who is compact—all over—and has an attitude! Now we pray that when he moves, he is basically sound coming, going, and on the go-around and doesn’t pick his front feet up too high—that is, hackney.

The standard says, “A good Pointer cannot be a bad color.” This does not mean that he can be purple! He can be liver and white, black and white, orange and white or lemon and white, with associated points to match—black noses and eye-rims on the blacks and oranges, self-colored on the livers and lemons. He can even be solid colored of any of the four colors listed previously. I will say, however, that I have never seen a solid-colored Pointer that I feel would fit into my above description of a good Pointer.

In my opinion, they may never be tricolored. Most of the oldest books now available warn frequently about tricolored Pointers carrying “too much of the Foxhound blood.”

Again, muzzle too long, ears too long, tails too long. Now, look at his feet. This is a working dog. Oval feet, not round, with well-arched toes, allowing him to work all kinds of ground effortlessly.

So, now what do we have? We have a moderately sized dog who comes into your ring with his head held rather arrogantly. Your first impression is head, tail, and attitude. Next, he appears to

balance, and he is in fit condition. We know now that the standard says he can’t be a bad color, and he is one that is acceptable.

Always look at a Pointer from all sides—coloring or patching can easily deceive, and for some reason his “off-side” is often more pleasing to the eye. He moves around your ring with power and grace. His tail, we hope, will lash somewhat from side to side as he moves soundly on four good legs. When he stops, he looks at you with a soft, trusting expression. Lucky you: You’ve just judged a good Pointer. The others just won’t measure up. Enjoy.—T.B.

Thank you Tom, for this informative column. Please visit the APC website at [americanpointerclub.org](http://americanpointerclub.org) for information on our wonderful breed. Your suggestions and comments are welcome.

—Helyne E. Medeiros,  
[seasydehm@aol.com](mailto:seasydehm@aol.com)

American Pointer Club website:  
[americanpointerclub.org](http://americanpointerclub.org)

## Curly-Coated Retrievers

Our guest columnist for this month is Patty Slighter, the owner of our highest-ranking Curly-Coated Retriever in U.S. agility. She now has a new puppy and shares the following ideas with us.

### Agility Quips

I love agility. I also love Curly-Coated Retrievers. So, now that I have my new puppy, Rooney, I want to ensure he’ll be a successful agility dog. Given that Curlies are slow to mature, I know it is senseless to start obstacles early. Instead, I’m focusing on the “Three Cs” of agility success: *control*, *conditioning*, and *confidence*. I figure by focusing on these while he’s a puppy, I can lay a foundation that fits this independent breed and will hopefully lead to results in the ring.

Here’s my approach:

**Control**—Impulse control is critical for start-line stays and contacts, both release skills. So preparing for this is critical. I use releasing from the crate,

the car, or out the door as opportunities to teach impulse control. I give a “sit-wait” command and then open the door and say “OK” to release. If he self-releases, I simply close the door. I don’t correct for self-releasing; he just doesn’t get the reward (that is, getting out). I wait until he corrects himself (sits and waits), and then I release him with an “OK!” His excitement isn’t curbed by a correction, the reward is just delayed until he has controlled his impulse.

**Conditioning**—Agility is about quick acceleration, deceleration, jumping, and turns. However, I don’t think there is an advantage to subjecting my puppy to these physical demands while he’s growing. So to keep him fit but not risk injury, I allow him to be a puppy. He roughhouses with my older dog, gets “the zoomies” in the yard, plays fetch, and swims whenever I can take him. He gets exercise without being pushed to perform.

**Confidence**—This last “C” is the most important one. I promote confidence in two ways: by exposing Rooney to everything, and correcting him for nothing! Rooney’s been going to trials and social events since I’ve had him. He’s been exposed to trial noises, to being crated around other dogs, and to meeting new dogs at the lake and new people everywhere. Because of this, nothing fazes him.

Regarding corrections (or lack thereof), Rooney never “gets in trouble.” Sometimes I divert his attention (substituting a toy for a couch pillow) or I stop him from being “self-rewarded” (when pulling the leash), but “No!” is unknown to him. Some may think I’m too lenient, but I want him to race to an obstacle with confidence when he’s on a course later on. I don’t want him to hesitate thinking he may be “wrong”; he knows no wrong. And I’ll add, this approach is not creating a terror. He’s a sweet puppy.

Finally, like most agility addicts, I went through the “I gotta getta Border Collie” phase, but decided my love for Curlies is stronger than my need for speed. So I’m raising a performance

dog, but more importantly, I’m raising a partner whose health and happiness are the main goals of everything I do with him.

Now, if this results in a few green ribbons along the way ... —P.S.

Thanks, Patty, for a very informative approach to preparing a pup for agility.

—Ann Shinkle, [annshinkle@aol.com](mailto:annshinkle@aol.com)

Curly-Coated Retriever Club of America website: [ccra.org](http://ccra.org)

## Flat-Coated Retrievers

### Loose-Lead Walking—No Lunging

The Flat-Coated Retriever is an exuberant dog who easily develops explosive behavior. This can lead to occasional on-lead accidents, so I am pleased to observe a national trend toward feeling that simply stopping and refusing to go forward until a dog returns to you is not adequate for all dogs being taught to walk on a loose lead. However, it is still the first step when the young, inexperienced puppy first begins to get ahead of you and begins to pull on the lead.

Once your puppy is enthusiastic about going for a walk, he will start leading you. If he pulls excessively, just stop, wait for him to return to you, and then praise him, play with him, or feed him treats. When you reach a point of having to stop frequently because he is pulling excessively, it’s time to go on to the next step.

Whether he is pulling you because of high spirits or is just sniffing the ground, turn and go in another direction with a lot of enthusiasm and cheerful talk. As he catches up with you stop, pet and praise him and play at retrieving, or feed a couple of treats. Then continue your walk.

If he is pulling because he sees something exciting, like a person, another dog, or an animal, go in the opposite direction quickly, talking cheerfully while you walk fast, and tease him as you walk with a toy, training dummy, or stick (using a stick only if he is not going to be a hunting dog). When you

get far enough away, like a half a block or so that the object of interest is out of sight, stop and interact with your puppy excitedly. If he is a show dog, have him stop and stand for a treat followed by play. If he is a pet, hunting, or competition dog, have him sit for petting and praise, and follow it with play-retrieving.

Every time you change direction when your puppy or dog is excited about something else, you are giving him a physical, visual, and verbal message that whatever that was, it wasn’t as important as the person he is with—*you!* Every time you stop with him afterward, you are giving him a message that you are not only the most important thing in his life, you are the most important thing on the walk, and also the most interesting and the most fun.

This is not only the fastest way to get him walking on a loose lead, it also eliminates lunging, because you are teaching him to think about you and what you want him to do when he sees something exciting. It is also the foundation of off-lead, open-space control, where he can’t be allowed to go running off to everything he sees.

If you happen to have a Flat-Coat who is a watchdog or is confrontational with other dogs (neither is typical of the breed), it also prevents aggression, because the lead, especially when tight, can trigger aggression. A tight lead is as frustrating to the dog as to the owner.

Happy walking!

—Sally Terroux, [sjterroux@aol.com](mailto:sjterroux@aol.com)

Flat-Coated Retriever Society of America website: [FCRSAtinc.org](http://FCRSAtinc.org)

## Golden Retrievers

### Gifts of Gold

The Golden Retriever—the gift that keeps on giving. The Golden Retriever is the pioneer breed in the Morris Animal Foundation’s Canine Lifetime Health Project (CLHP), the longest and most comprehensive observational study ever undertaken on canine health issues. An online project that potentially will benefit all breeds of dogs, the intent of the Golden Retriever Lifetime Health Study is to