

dropped on a concrete floor nearby, an announcement on the public-address system, or a car backfiring. Such sudden and unexpected noises can cause even the most confident dogs (and handlers) to startle or jump. This should be a temporary reaction, however, and the noise shouldn't affect the dog for more than a minute before he returns to normal baying, gaiting, or stacking.

There is nothing more disgusting to knowledgeable breeders, owners, and handlers than to watch a judge award a class to a dog who clamped his tail or pinned his ears during the entire class, or to see a dog who has repeatedly shied away from the judge receive the points. And it doesn't matter how pretty or typey the dog is—he doesn't deserve to win! —Jodi Quesnell,

idaviregups@isp.com

—German Wirehaired Pointer Club of America website: gupca.com

Chesapeake Bay Retrievers

The Chesapeake: Bred to Work

From the earliest days of the Bay Duck Dog, the Gunpowder River Dog, or Otter Dog, the Chesapeake Bay Duck Dog was bred for his superior courage, strength, and endurance to retrieve multiple birds all day long in the harshest weather. He is first of all a water dog. From the shores of the Chesapeake Bay, where he began, to the lakes of the Midwest and the rivers and ocean of the West, a Chessie is at home in the water.

With his wedge-shaped head and strong muzzle and neck he can carry the largest goose, and yet he is gentle enough to retrieve the smallest dove. His ears are set high on his head to keep them out of the water and dry. The thin lips leave no place for feathers to lodge. The characteristic yellow or amber eyes are clear and intense. Some old-timers thought the eye color gives the Chesapeake the superior vision of an eagle. His broad chest holds a heart and lungs that keep up his stamina. At the prow of a boat, he can break ice

and push a heavy goose through the roughest seas. His well-webbed hare feet become paddles when he swims. His strong toes and nails can claw up a steep, muddy riverbank.

Bigger is not better. *Moderate* is a key word. He is of medium build so as not to crowd a hunter in the blind nor swamp the rowboat. His strong rear end propels his mighty leap into the water and can drive him through the thick mud of shallow water. His tail is like a rudder, steering him after a cripple.

The all-important double coat is the mark of a Chessie. A thick, downy undercoat protects his skin from the cold and wet. The harsh, slightly wavy oily outercoat repels the water. When a Chessie comes out of the water and shakes, he is just slightly damp. He has no long hair on his sides, face, or legs to trap the water. In the winter, water doesn't freeze on his coat, and he doesn't swamp the hunter's blind. His coat repels the water, much like a duck's feathers.

A Chesapeake is a camouflaged dog. He comes in all shades of brown, from the light brown of the dead grasses that hide him in winter wheatfields, to the brown of a lake's muddy banks, to the red of the sedge grass that grows along the shores. His color suits him for all working conditions. He is the color of his background that makes him undetectable in an open blind.

The Chessie in the show ring does not have the high-stepping gait of a flashy dog, but he moves smoothly, exuding power and grace. He exhibits a keen, friendly temperament, with tail waving, ears up, and a happy grin on his face. He moves easily from field to show ring.

—Audrey Austin, *audreyaustin@cox.net*

American Chesapeake Club website: amchessieclub.org

Curly-Coated Retrievers

That Drooping Tail

Call it what you wish—"limp tail," "cold tail," "swimmer's tail," or

"dead tail"—it manifests itself as a tail that seems paralyzed, and it is a very unpleasant surprise to the dog's owner. One usually awakens to see a downtrodden-looking dog with a non-wagging tail hanging limply down.

I first observed a Curly with this problem at a Curly-Coated Retriever specialty many years ago. Since then, two of my Curlies have experienced limber tail. Both instances occurred during a cluster of shows.

The first event started the night before the shows began, and I excused her from all four days of competition. (There were quite a few Curlies entered at these shows, so doing this did not affect the points earned by the other dogs there. Not showing gave me a chance to observe all the classes in which the Curlies were shown, which I thoroughly enjoy doing.)

The second instance occurred the day after my other bitch, fortunately, had just completed her championship. If I had excused her from the last day of competition, the major would have been broken.

One is definitely in a quandary in a case like this. A dog with a limber tail is not very normal looking in the show ring. I decided to keep her in that last show and not say a word. The judge, fortunately, thought that she simply looked dejected, and that was that.

There are some veterinarians who have never seen this problem and are clueless as to what limber tail is. Since it is fairly common among sporting breeds, one should be aware of what it looks like. One study concluded that the occygeal muscles near the base of the tail may have sustained damage. This can happen if a dog is crated for periods of time and may wag his tail, bashing it on the sides of the crate. There may be several causes for the malady.

During my most recent experience with limber tail, it was evening and pouring with rain outside when I took my Curly for her last walk. I dried her off very well, but she was still damp when she entered her crate to sleep. It

was cool during the night, and she awoke with that drooping tail. I am now very careful if it has been raining, they have gotten very wet, and it is nighttime. A better drying-off period before she goes to bed and a warm area are important in the future.

Some owners who I spoke to have noted that their dogs have limber tail after a prolonged swim in cold water.

It is wise for owners to be aware of this problem, as some dogs do experience pain with this condition; others do not. It will usually clear up within a week with no treatment. If your dog seems uncomfortable, take him to your veterinarian.

There is a lot more information about limber tail syndrome on the Internet. The article that I read goes more in depth into the subject.

Owner awareness is important when it comes to that drooping tail.

—Ann Shinkle, annshinkle@aol.com

Curly-Coated Retriever Club of America website: ccra.org

Flat-Coated Retrievers

The Unique Flat Coat

The coat of the Flat-Coated Retriever is unique in my experience as an AKC-licensed all-breed handler who has been active in rescue and professional dog training for decades. I was chair of the committee that wrote the breed standard now used in this country, and we described the coat as best we could by referring to the British breed standard and various breed articles.

Coat—Coat is of moderate length, density and fullness, with a high lustre. The ideal coat is straight and flat lying. A slight waviness is permissible but the coat is not curly, wooly, short, silky or fluffy.”

The slight waviness is usually over the rump but lays flat and does not have the appearance of a broken or curly coat. The Flat-Coat should not be short haired but should show length of coat on the back and the sides of the body. The Flat-Coat was originally

known as the Wavy-Coated Retriever, but breeders decided to breed for the flatter coat with straighter hair because it dried more quickly.

“The Flat-Coat 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.”

There is purposely no mention of undercoat in the standard. The Flat-Coat does have some undercoat on the front and sides of the body, but on top of the back, parted hair should show no undercoat.

“When the dog is in full coat the ears, front, chest, backs of forelegs, thighs, and underside of tail are thickly feathered without being bushy, stringy, or silky.”

The lie of the breed’s coat is so strong that the britches, when the dog is in a full coat, are very neat in appearance, with a sharp outline, and do not need to be trimmed as would stringy or silky hair. Bushy, stringy, silky, or flowing coats tend to mat and tangle more than the Flat-Coat’s coat and are not practical for a working gundog.

“Mane of longer heavier coat on the neck extending over the withers and shoulders is considered typical, especially in the male dog, and can cause the neck to appear thicker and the withers higher, sometimes causing the appearance of a dip behind the withers. Since the Flat-Coat is a hunting retriever, feathering is not excessively long.”

Trimming—The Flat-Coat is shown with as natural a coat as possible and must not be penalized for a lack of trimming, as long as the coat is clean and well brushed.”

The Flat-Coat should be able to go from the field to the show ring and back to the field, as they do at every national specialty.

“Tidying of ears, feet, underline, and tip of tail is acceptable.” If other trimming is needed, the owner should consider that a fault that is covered up by skillful grooming is still going to be

carried and passed on genetically.

“Whiskers serve a specific function, and it is preferred that they not be trimmed.” This is well documented, but I have had personal experience with eye injuries cause by whisker-trimmed dogs being taken into the field for training or hunting too soon. Flat-Coat owners should disregard pressure to trim whiskers as is done in many other sporting breeds. The Flat-Coat is still a dual-purpose dog.

“Shaving or barbering of the head, neck, or body coat must be severely penalized.”

Shaving or barbering of the neck would not give protection in cold water and heavy brush and would not show the typical silhouette of the breed.

—Sally Terroux, sjterroux@aol.com

Flat-Coated Retriever Society of America website: FCRSAinc.org

Golden Retrievers Super Sniffers

Perhaps it’s no coincidence that “Golden Retriever” rhymes with “overachiever.” Witness the thousands of Golden Retrievers who daily perform countless acts of service, both large and small, for their human family and community.

Golden Retriever and bomb-sniffing expert Bella is but one of those many dogs. A 2011 recipient of the American Kennel Club Humane Fund’s Award for Canine Excellence (ACE) in law enforcement, Bella and her Golden partner, Ginger, serve with the West Virginia University Police Department. With their owner-handler, Sergeant Josh Cook, “the girls” do pregame sweeps for explosives of the school’s 14,000-seat football stadium for WVU’s seven home games, and they also do sweeps for other large events such as commencement and visits of dignitaries, which have included former President Bill Clinton and high-ranking military personnel. They also help secure venues all over West Virginia and visit schools in response to bomb threats.