

exam, come when called, and sit- and down-stay. For Novice Agility and Novice Agility Jumpers titles, dogs must show teamwork with their handler and strength to navigate a difficult course around the ring. For the Tracking Dog title, they must first be certified by a tracking judge that they are able to complete a track. At the test the dog must follow a 30-minute-old track, laid in the field by a stranger, find turns, and locate a glove at the end. Nine Chesapeakes have earned this title. Of these, two are conformation champions, one is a Master Agility Champion II, three have Hunting Dog titles, three have Tracking Dog Excellent titles, two have a Utility Dog titles, seven have advanced agility titles, seven have rally titles, and one is a therapy dog.

Level two, VCD2, requires a dog to earn a Companion Dog Excellent obedience title, an Open agility title, and a Tracking Dog title. Each of these levels requires more dedication and training. Companion Dog Excellent-level obedience requires demonstration of retrieving and jumping skills; control, with the drop on recall; and confidence, with out-of-sight sit- and down-stays. In Open agility the courses are longer and more difficult, with more "traps." Four Chesapeakes have earned this difficult title, and three of these have rally titles and more advanced agility titles.

Level three, VCD3, requires a dog to earn the Utility Dog degree, the most difficult obedience title, which requires multiple skills and intense training. For the Agility Excellent title, the dog and handler can make no errors while running a long, difficult course. The Tracking Dog Excellent title requires a dog to follow a stranger's scent that is aged three to five hours, find four articles, navigate turns and two obstacles, and ignore two cross-tracks. There are seven Chesapeakes with this distinctive title. Four are conformation champions, three have Master Agility Excellent titles, and two have rally and hunting titles.

The fourth level, VCD4, requires the Utility Dog Excellent; Master Agility Excellent and MXJ (Master Excellent

Jumpers With Weaves), or MXP (Master Agility Excellent Preferred) and MJP (Master Excellent Jumpers With Weaves Preferred); and the VST (Variable Surface Tracking) title.

The highest level is the Versatile Companion Champion title (VCCH), awarded to any dog who becomes an OTCH (Obedience Trial Champion), also earns the MACH (Master Agility Champion) or PACH (Preferred Agility Champion), and earns the CT (Champion Tracker) title. Of all breeds, only five dogs have attained this exceptional pinnacle.

When these dogs' registered names are printed out with all the titles before and after the name, it makes for a very impressive statement.

Chesapeakes are a versatile breed. They are strong, agile, biddable, and eager to answer the request of their owners.

—Audrey Austin,
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American Chesapeake Club website:
amchessieclub.org

Curly-Coated Retrievers Training Rewards

So often I have thought about how lucky we are to be training our dogs in different activities. Owners of our Curlies have a breed who is happy to take part in many of the activities now offered. Not only are the performance activities good for the dogs as they earn their titles, but we, as handlers, benefit also. However, it was not until recently that I gave some thought to this. I recently was hospitalized for vertigo and now realize, as a physical therapist, just how important are the activities involved in training our Curlies. Rally obedience is especially good for improving coordination and a "thinking while moving" type of training for our brains.

When I recently read a message from a person on the rally network who had experienced numerous head concussions and was unsteady, it prompted me to write this column. She realized that, even though she had balance problems

and a slow response to some of the signs, the actual activity of working with her dog was an important accomplishment for her. I quite agree, and we are very fortunate to be able to train our dogs today in the many activities offered in spite of the many different types of limitations one may have.

I recently spoke to a rally judge who said that it is wise for a handler to inform the judge beforehand if having some limitation that is not discernible to the eye. It is easy for a judge to know that a person is handicapped when they enter the ring in a wheelchair or use a walker, but a judge might not be aware of issues such as balance problems, deafness, or another condition unless informed beforehand.

So the next time that you may be upset when your dog did not perform as you thought he should, think to yourself that this time in the ring with him may have been of benefit to you, even though his score was not as hoped for.

Another positive outlook today is that more and more seniors are taking part in our various activities. Most of us today know that the more active one is as the years fly by, the better. Entering the various activities with our dogs keeps us all active, both physically and mentally. I always try to do the walk-through for the rally and agility courses right up to the last minute allowed. This not only may help us perform better in the ring, but also keeps our thoughts and strategies in order.

I know that I feel very fortunate to own Curly-Coated Retrievers who both enjoy performance activities as well as the show ring.

—Ann Shinkle, annshinkle@aol.com
Curly-Coated Retriever Club of America website: www.crcra.org

Flat-Coated Retrievers

Flat-Coats Excel at Upland Hunting Tests

Starting on January 1, 2012, Flat-Coats have been eligible to participate in the American Kennel Club's Spaniel Hunting Test program.