

why it is so important to make an effort to review the standard over and over before making your own assumptions or drawing conclusions in discussion with a misinformed "expert." Doing so may put one in a very embarrassing position. Even worse, a really great dog can lose under a judge who is not fully informed.

—Nathaniel Horn, Columbia, Md.;
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Some Thoughtful Questions

PART ONE

A few months ago, a prospective Curly-Coated Retriever owner asked some questions about a litter of Curly pups. Following are his questions and the responses I gave him.

I have concerns about there being pattern baldness in some lines. In pups, am I able to see what adult coats will be like?

Many breeders have experience with pattern baldness. I can show you tapes of past specialties in which it was dreadful! However, most breeders today try to avoid this problem through careful breeding. There is less today but it does crop up, even with the most careful planning.

My response as to whether one can predict coat type when looking at pups is an emphatic "No!" Some straight, fuzzy coats turn out full of tight curls; some wavy coats stay full of waves; some end up with big curls; some adult-type coats come in quickly, and some take time. A well-known Curly judge says that there are often three full changes of coat before the final outcome is known.

I want a male to show, and I like a head that is masculine with good eye color and a full set of teeth. What about eye color and dentition?

The litter you are considering should all have good heads in both sexes. Our standard does not address missing teeth. I do agree with you, however, regarding the importance of full dentition. I know of no missing teeth in either the parents or grandparents. As

regards eye color, some Curlies have light eyes, but in this particular litter the close relatives all have good eye color.

One of my biggest concerns is a really good front. A good front is often hard to find in certain breeds. What is your opinion regarding the fronts of the parents of this litter (as I have only seen photos taken from the side)?

When I first owned Curlies years ago, I did not even know what a good front was. But after a trip to England and a look at many of the Curlies there, I sure knew that something was lacking in between the front legs of some of our Curlies here. Today, many breeders have blended overseas lines with what we have here, and fronts are better. The breeder of this litter should be able to select a well-balanced pup for you.

I shall continue with Part Two in my next column, in the January 2010 issue.

—Ann Shinkle, Grand Island, Fla.;
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Loose-Lead Training

The Flat-Coated Retriever is an excitable, enthusiastic dog, especially when a person or another dog is in sight. The breed tends to be explosive when excited. That means lunging when on a lead, causing owners to feel that they could never use a long line or a retractable lead with their Flat-Coat, or they would be pulled off their feet.

The more any untrained dog is restrained by a lead, the more frustrated he gets, the more he pulls, and the harder he lunges. Loose-lead training begins when you put on the leash, which should be 6–10 feet long. Have your dog sit or stand as you attach the lead, then have him sit or stop and stand a few times in the house before you go to the door. Have him sit or stand at the door and wait while you go out. Then have him come out on command and sit or stand again while you close the door. Have him continue to sit or stand every two steps until he is manageable outdoors before you

begin the walk.

When you begin walking, let him go to the end of the lead. When he reaches the end and begins pulling, turn and quickly walk in the opposite direction, giving lots of praise. As soon as he catches up with you, stop and have him sit or stand, and pet and praise him. Play or give him a treat or two. As you continue the walk, quickly turn and go in the opposite direction whenever he pulls the lead tight or sees anything that interests him. Offer a lot of cheerful praise as you turn, and walk quickly. Stop when you have the dog's full attention, and have him sit or stand, giving lots of praise and petting with play or treats. Let him know that he is on a walk with you and that nothing in the world should be more important to him than his owner.

You might at first have to move him out of sight of the object of his attention, but he will respond more and more quickly with consistent handling. Until your dog is manageable on the lead and not pulling, you can do no socializing on the lead.

We have to socialize the Flat-Coat enough, with adults and children of all ages and other dogs, so that he remains friendly and confident with everyone. We don't want to overstimulate the Flat-Coat with so much socialization, however, that he becomes more interested in others than the owner. This is especially important with the adolescent dog.

When your dog is doing well on a loose lead and ready to socialize, turn away when you first see a friend. Walk away quickly, and have your dog sit or stand and interact with you. By the third or fourth time that you turn away, your puppy or dog should be controllable and understand that *you* are in charge of the visit. Have him sit or stand to greet people. If he gets too excited while visiting, turn and take him away again, and repeat. Use the same handling when meeting children and other dogs. Always control your dog on a loose lead around other dogs before allowing play.

With this handling you will be able to control your dog on a lead of any length or type, including retractable leashes. —Sally Terroux, Arvada, Colo.;
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