

Aids needed in the event of a reflex-timing miss. Currently she has more “strikes”—and we have considered buying stock in the band-aid market for the foreseeable future.

We’ve discussed that maybe we should consider getting another dog close to her age, but we decided we’re not *that* senile yet. —Patte Titus, chexsix@mac.com; German Shorthaired Pointer Club of America website: gpsca.org

German Wirehaired Pointers

What If ...

What if the dog world were a place where everyone shared their failures openly? If a breeder had something undesirable crop up in a litter—a birth defect, a health problem, a funky color or marking, or something else unusual—they would let all of the other breeders know. Then everyone involved in the breed could look at what was produced and try to determine why it showed up in this particular litter, and they could work on how to avoid having something like this crop up again. What if we knew, for example, that the particular problem crops up when descendants from dog “A” are bred to dogs from line “B,” but not when bred to dogs from line “C”? If such information was shared openly, breeders could work collaboratively to address incidence of certain health conditions, color problems, and other serious issues.

Sadly, in the dog world the exact opposite tends to be true. When a breeder has something funky, unusual, or detrimental occur in a litter, often instead of sharing the information they hide it. They may tell their closest friends, their mentor, or others they trust, but the majority of other breeders will never hear of it, except maybe as a rumor later when the issue pops up again in a different breeder’s litter. At that time someone will say, “I think this happened in so-and-so’s litter.” But no one will know for sure. And because breeders aren’t aware of the issue, they may do breedings that repeat the bad

“nick.” This continues until the problem becomes widespread and a majority of breeders have the problem occurring in their litters. Only then do enough people come forward and openly share information to try and “fix” the problem.

Why aren’t we open about things in the beginning? Why hide something just because it isn’t common? Sadly, the reason is because the breeder who is open and honest about their problem won’t be thanked for their honesty. Instead they will be attacked and criticized for their “mistake”—and they will be blamed, as though they somehow knew that this problem would occur and knowingly and deliberately produced the problem! Other breeders will sit back with 20–20 vision and rant and rave about how irresponsible it was to do the breeding. Some might even say it is the breeder’s own fault that they are being attacked, because they should have hidden the problem and not been honest about it. *What?*

I know breeders who had had serious health problems occur with a breeding and who were honest and up-front about the issue, and I admire them for their bravery. It takes considerable courage to come forward with an unusual problem knowing that you may be blamed and attacked, and more than likely you and your dogs will become outcasts from the breed. But, I honestly can’t blame those who hide such information. After witnessing firsthand how nasty some breeders can be when something unusual occurs in a litter, I wouldn’t blame anyone for not being open. In such an environment, breeders will never be able to manage hereditary issues that occur in the breed, and the problem will become so common that a majority of the breeders have it in their lines. And *that* is the real problem!

This is my last GWP breed column. I have really enjoyed the experience, but it is time for someone with fresh new ideas and a different perspective. —Jodi Quesnell; idaiviregups@gmail.com; German Wirehaired Pointer Club of America: gpsca.com

Curly-Coated Retrievers

Field Fun

Recently there was a field training and testing event held in Tennessee for our Curly-Coated Retrievers. Sarah Shull was in charge of these four full days of activities that took place at Bear Country Retriever training grounds and were hosted by Sherie, Clint, and Billy Catledge. This event was very significant to me, as I realized how far we have come in the past 30 years regarding fieldwork for Curlies.

When I acquired my first Curly in the late 1970s, there was probably only a handful of Curlies in the United States who actually hunted. Entries in field events at that time were unheard of. Of course, now there are far more field activities for the dogs to enter but, also, there are quite a few more Curlies who take part in them. I recall that at one of our working certificate tests at our national specialty in the 1980s, there were four Curlies entered. Compare that to the many now entered. Also, the Curly-Coated Retriever Club of America has added an upland working certificate, allowing Curlies to participate in an activity at which they excel.

Over the four days there were sessions for beginners and pups; activities for more experienced dogs; a practice mock WC/X/Q testing situation, on both land and water; and a full day of the three levels of actual working certificate tests that our CCRCA offers. Problems were addressed and solved, all accomplished in a very positive way.

One of the most interesting setups took place the second day. A “boogie man” course had been set up by Sarah to acquaint any dogs who were starting the hunt-test routine with rather scary situations they might encounter. All dogs could walk through this, and it was a wonderful idea, I thought. So often, I have seen some dogs in testing situations that have not encountered decoys before—some are large and moving and scare the dogs. Also, on

windy days, the holding blind may have flapping material, and dogs need to be used to that. Sarah thought of many potential frightening situations, and they were all experienced by the dogs participating.

Over the four days, Sarah states that there was some great progression by all the dogs and handlers. Thirty-four Curlies, eight Flat-Coated Retrievers, three Labradors, and one German Shorthaired Pointer worked in different activities and thoroughly enjoyed it all.

—Ann Shinkle, amshinkle@aol.com;
Curly Coated Retriever Club of America website: ccra.org

Flat-Coated Retrievers

Re-homing the Adult Flat-Coat PART TWO

When arriving at the new home, the rescue Flat-Coat should first be taken out into the backyard and encouraged to relieve himself in a preferred area. Flat-Coats are very clean dogs, but they can become confused in a strange household, especially when upset and excited.

Next, take the Flat-Coat for a walk through the house on a leash. Let him investigate, but also let him know what the house rules are. Keep him closely supervised and in the same room you are in unless confining him to a crate or another room—and then stay close by at first to be sure he is not upset by the separation.

The dog's diet should not be changed for at least two weeks, and the schedule for meals and exercise should remain as close as possible to what the dog was familiar with in the former household.

Introduce the Flat-Coat to other family dogs in a neutral area, one at a time, then in a large, fenced area—again, one at a time. Even social dogs have to work out dominance issues, and family dogs can be possessive of resources as well as of favorite family members. (Expect to have to supervise the behavior and relationships of the new dog for at least three months. A

new dog can begin with the submission of a “visitor” and by three months want to assert dominance.)

Always leave the dog calmly and pleasantly, with a radio playing, soft lighting, bedding, water, toys, and a treat. Always return to him calmly and pleasantly by going to him and putting the collar and lead on before taking him out of a confined area. This calm return, preferably by one adult alone, helps to prevent separation anxiety.

If the dog becomes very upset at being confined, be sure you are confining in the same way the former owners did. If you have no information about this, experiment to see what he might be used to. A foster home should realize, however, that leaving the dog in the company of other dogs does not prepare him for being left alone.

The Flat-Coat should not be left outdoors unsupervised for the first month. They have a strong homing instinct, and if a Flat-Coat left alone can get out of a yard during the first month, he or she will attempt to return to the former home, regardless of distance. Flat-Coats are very agile and usually require a five- or six-foot fence if they are eventually left outside alone. They are also very intelligent and curious and can find other ways out of a yard if they have the time to investigate.

If there are children in the household, they should be supervised with the new dog for the first three months unless they are teenagers, assuming the role of primary caretaker. Children under 8 years of age should be supervised even longer. This is to be sure that rules for both the pet and the children are being followed. —Sally Terroux, sjterroux@aol.com; Flat-Coated Retriever Society of America website: fersainc.org

Labrador Retrievers

Labs and Kids, Part Three: It's Great to Be Eight

Children are generally recognized to be capable of a more mature relationship once they reach the age of about 8 years. Eight-year-olds are

allowed to participate with their dogs in 4-H events. At 9 years, children are eligible for the AKC's Junior Showmanship program. The ASPCA recognizes that kids from the age of 9 and up are good candidates for attending obedience classes with their dog, as well as potentially being ready for competition in different venues.

This age milestone is generally the result of emotional and physical growth that make children in this age group more effective as trainers and more reliable as caretakers than younger children. The ASPCA proposes specifically that children around 8 years old are more capable of understanding thoughts and feelings from the dog's perspective. This age group also behaves in a more predictable way that is not as likely to make dogs uneasy. They are also generally large enough to have an “adult like” presence, if not the physical strength to control a large animal.

While many training organizations are reluctant to include children in their classes, it has been my experience that children at this age are often better students than adults. They are used to learning in school and aren't as likely as adults to have to “unlearn” old habits. When young people are motivated, they are capable of applying themselves and improving their training techniques. Adults who can't focus on their dogs long enough to be effective trainers rarely improve.

Family dogs who might have been accustomed to tolerating the child as a peer may need to undergo a reset of their perspective as the child asserts leadership through training. In our household it has been interesting to watch the “old salts” tutor my daughter (age 9) in her role as handler in classic obedience, agility, and fieldwork. They clearly find her much more interesting now that she has a more active place in their lives. The young dogs, which have never known her as anything but a leader, are even more receptive and are keenly interested in what she wants to teach them. These observations have reinforced for me the motivation so