

SPORTING GROUP

Curly-Coated Retrievers

THE UPLAND GAME PART TWO

Our upland-hunting discussion with Kathy Phillips continues. She notes that for training, you will need a solid whistle recall, a release-to-hunt command, and encouragement to work cover. She does this in her own backyard by dragging a bird or wing and hiding it under shrubbery.

In our updated version of the Upland Working Certificate, now being worked on and soon to be finalized, the Curly does not need to be steady, and this is probably a good point. Katherine says that when starting an upland dog, demanding steadiness too soon can cause the dog to “blink” birds. There are videos about training flushing spaniels that can describe how and when to train for steadiness to wing and shot. You can also watch the Outdoor Life cable channel, which features upland hunting now and then. It all may sound simple, but that is because you cannot train a dog to love birds and hunting. It takes a level of “willing cooperation” that you can foster but not *create* if it is not there in the first place.

Kathy goes on to emphasize that the Curly would be a very different dog without the upland elements in his makeup. If we, the owners of Curly-Coated Retrievers, do not provide some way to test for those elements,

they will be lost. If we never put on a hunt test or run field trial stakes at our specialty, there is no loss or risk to the breed, because those field events are readily available elsewhere—as are agility, obedience, and rally trials. If we do not do upland at our specialties, there is no meaningful way of sustaining this breed’s versatility. We *chose* this breed, and as a result, we have a distinct responsibility to protect and promote *everything that it is*—not just the parts that people enjoy playing with the most. It is up to us to do this breed justice. No one else is going to do it for us!

Thanks, Kathy, for sharing your field expertise with us.

I would like to add that the CCRCFA Field Committee is aware of the importance of upland work. One of our Field Committee members, Buck Buchanan, is presently working on updating the UWC (Upland Working Certificate) rules. He is also writing the rules for our new level, the UWCX, (Upland Working Certificate Excellent). I am hoping that these two levels of upland field work will be offered at our May 2018 national specialty, which will be held in the Philadelphia area. Also, our very special Curly event for field training, Curlyville, in Tennessee, for the past few years has offered the three levels of Curly working field levels—WC, WCX, and WCQ—and now, hopefully, we shall soon be

able to offer our own training tests for upland work.

—Ann Shinkle,
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 Curly-Coated Retriever Club of America

Golden Retrievers

GOLDEN COMFORT AND COMPASSION

They are sometimes referred to as “second responders”—Golden Retriever therapy dogs who travel the country to offer furry comfort the victims of tragedy and natural disasters, wherever that comfort is needed. Their mission: to help heal the deep emotional wounds you cannot see.

Last November, as they have done on countless other occasions, the LCC (Lutheran Church Charities) K-9 Comfort Golden Retrievers traveled to Sutherland Springs, Texas, to comfort the families of the victims, the injured, the church congregation, and the first responders who tended the scene of the worst shooting in Texas history.

LCC President and CEO, Tim Hetzner, accompanied eight ministry teams from Texas, Oklahoma, and Indiana, to spend a week serving the community that was in mourning over their loss. Comfort dogs Pax, Phoebe, Abner, Damaris, Elijah, Gabriel, Barnabas, and Rufus and their handlers arrived to pro-

vide a furry shoulder to cry on, friendly paws to hold, and prayers for comfort, peace, and understanding.

“We had boots and paws on the ground within in 24 hours,” Hetzner said. “The dogs have a sense. They know when someone is hurting. They will edge over to someone if they sense it.”

Petting, hugging, nuzzling, it’s all part of the job. People often start crying when they hug the dogs.

“Crying is a key part of the body healing itself,” Hetzner said. “And the dogs are content to just stay put and soak up the tears. There are things the dogs do that humans just can’t. When you’ve been through a disaster, many humans feel like they have to say something, like ‘You’ll get through this.’ We all say stupid things. But dogs don’t say stupid things.”

“Dogs are good listeners,” he continued. “They’re confidential, nonjudgmental. They’re safe. Many times people will talk to the dogs before someone else. They relax when they’re petting a dog. When they relax, they start talking about what they’re going through. And a key part of the healing process is to be able to talk about what you’re going through!”

The K-9 Comfort Dog resume spans more than a dozen major disasters in the U.S. In