

Flat-Coated Retriever

AKC Approved September 11, 1990
Effective October 30, 1990



General Appearance The Flat-Coated Retriever is a versatile family companion hunting retriever with a happy and active demeanor, intelligent expression, and clean lines. The Flat-Coat has been traditionally described as showing "*power without lumber and raciness without weediness.*"

The distinctive and most important features of the Flat-Coat are the silhouette (both moving and standing), smooth effortless movement, head type, coat and character. In silhouette the Flat-Coat has a long, strong, clean, "one piece" head, which is unique to the breed. Free from exaggeration of stop or cheek, the head is set well into a moderately long neck which flows smoothly into well laid back shoulders. A level topline combined with a deep, long rib cage tapering to a moderate tuck-up create the impression of a blunted triangle. The brisket is well developed and the forechest forms a prominent prow. This utilitarian retriever is well balanced, strong, but elegant; never cobby, short legged or rangy. The coat is thick and flat lying, and the legs and tail are well feathered. A proud carriage, responsive attitude, waving tail and overall look of functional strength, quality, style and symmetry complete the picture of the typical Flat-Coat.

Judging the Flat-Coat moving freely on a loose lead and standing naturally is more important than judging him posed. Honorable scars should not count against the dog.

Size, Proportion, Substance: *Size*--Individuals varying more than an inch either way from the preferred height should be considered not practical for the types of work for which the Flat-Coat was developed. Preferred height is 23 to 24½ inches at the withers for dogs, 22 to 23½ inches for bitches. Since the Flat-Coat is a working hunting retriever he should be shown in lean, hard condition, free of excess weight.

Proportion--The Flat-Coat is not cobby in build. The length of the body from the point of the shoulder to the rearmost projection of the upper thigh is slightly more than the height at the withers. The female may be slightly longer to better accommodate the carrying of puppies. *Substance*-- Moderate. Medium bone is flat or oval rather than round; strong but never massive, coarse, weedy or fine. This applies throughout the dog.

Head: The long, clean, well molded head is adequate in size and strength to retrieve a large pheasant, duck or hare with ease. **Skull and Muzzle**--The impression of the skull and muzzle being "cast in one piece" is created by the fairly flat skull of moderate breadth and flat, clean cheeks, combined with the long, strong, deep muzzle which is well filled in before, between and beneath the eyes. Viewed from above, the muzzle is nearly equal in length and breadth to the skull. **Stop**--There is a gradual, slight, barely perceptible stop, avoiding a down or dish-faced appearance. Brows are slightly raised and mobile, giving life to the expression. Stop must be evaluated in profile so that it will not be confused with the raised brow. *Occiput* not accentuated, the skull forming a gentle curve where it fits well into the neck. **Expression** alert, intelligent and kind. **Eyes** are set widely apart. Medium sized, almond shaped, dark brown or hazel; not large, round or yellow. Eye rims are self-colored and tight. **Ears** relatively small, well set on, lying close to the side of the head and thickly feathered. Not low set (houndlike or setterish). **Nose**--Large open nostrils. Black on black dogs, brown on liver dogs. **Lips** fairly tight, firm, clean and dry to minimize the retention of feathers. **Jaws** long and strong, capable of carrying a hare or a pheasant. **Bite**-- Scissors bite preferred, level bite acceptable. Broken teeth should not count against the dog. **Severe Faults** *Wry and undershot or overshot bites with a noticeable gap must be severely penalized.*

Neck, Topline, Body: *Neck* strong and slightly arched for retrieving strength. Moderately long to allow for easy seeking of the trail. Free from throatiness. Coat on neck is untrimmed. *Topline* strong and level. **Body--Chest (Brisket)**--Deep, reaching to the elbow and only moderately broad. **Forechest**--Prow prominent and well developed. **Rib cage** deep, showing good length from forechest to last rib (to allow ample space for all body organs), and only moderately broad. The foreribs fairly flat showing a gradual spring, well arched in the center of the body but rather lighter towards the loin. **Underline**--Deep chest tapering to a moderate tuck-up. **Loin** strong, well muscled and long enough to allow for agility, freedom of movement and length of stride, but never weak or loosely coupled. **Croup** slopes very slightly; rump moderately broad and well muscled. **Tail** fairly straight, well set on, with bone reaching approximately to the hock joint. When the dog is in motion, the tail is carried happily but without curl as a smooth extension of the topline, never much above the level of the back.

Forequarters: Shoulders long, well laid back shoulder blade with upper arm of approximately equal length to allow for efficient reach. Musculature wiry rather than bulky. **Elbows** clean, close to the body and set well back under the withers. **Forelegs** straight and strong with medium bone of good quality. **Pasterns** slightly sloping and strong. **Dewclaws**--Removal of dewclaws is optional. **Feet** oval or round. Medium sized and tight with well arched toes and thick pads.

Hindquarters: Powerful with angulation in balance with the front assembly. *Upper thighs* powerful and well muscled. *Stifle*-- Good turn of stifle with sound, strong joint. *Second thighs (Stifle to hock joint)*--Second or lower thigh as long as or only slightly longer than upper thigh. *Hock*--Hock joint strong, well let down. *Dewclaws* There are no hind dewclaws. *Feet* oval or round. Medium sized and tight with well arched toes and thick pads.

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 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. When the dog is in full coat the ears, front, chest, back of forelegs, thighs and underside of tail are thickly feathered without being bushy, stringy or silky. 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, the feathering is not excessively long. **Trimming** --The Flat-Coat is shown with as natural a coat as possible and must not be penalized for lack of trimming, as long as the coat is clean and well brushed. Tidying of ears, feet, underline and tip of tail is acceptable. Whiskers serve a specific function and it is preferred that they not be trimmed. *Shaving or barbering of the head, neck or body coat must be severely penalized.*

Color: Solid black or solid liver. **Disqualification**-- *Yellow, cream or any color other than black or liver.*

Gait: Sound, efficient movement is of critical importance to a hunting retriever. The Flat-Coat viewed from the side covers ground efficiently and movement appears balanced, free flowing and well coordinated, never choppy, mincing or ponderous. Front and rear legs reach well forward and extend well back, achieving long clean strides. Topline appears level, strong and supple while dog is in motion.

Summary: The Flat-Coat is a strong but elegant, cheerful hunting retriever. Quality of structure, balance and harmony of all parts both standing and in motion are essential. As a breed whose purpose is of a utilitarian nature, structure, condition and attitude should give every indication of being suited for hard work.

Temperament: Character is a primary and outstanding asset of the Flat-Coat. He is a responsive, loving member of the family, a versatile working dog, multi-talented, sensible, bright and tractable. In competition the Flat-Coat demonstrates *stability* and a desire to please with a confident, happy and outgoing attitude characterized by a wagging tail. *Nervous, hyperactive, apathetic, shy or obstinate behavior is undesirable.* **Severe Fault**--*Unprovoked aggressive behavior toward people or animals is totally unacceptable.*

Character: Character is as important to the evaluation of stock by a potential breeder as any other aspect of the breed standard. The Flat-Coat is primarily a family companion hunting retriever. He is keen and birdy, flushing within gun range, as well as a determined, resourceful retriever on land and water. He has a great desire to hunt with self-reliance and an uncanny ability to adapt to changing circumstances on a variety of upland game and waterfowl.

As a family companion he is sensible, alert and highly intelligent; a lighthearted, affectionate and adaptable friend. He retains these qualities as well as his youthfully good-humored outlook on life into old age. The adult Flat-Coat is usually an adequate alarm dog to give warning, but is a good-natured, optimistic dog, basically inclined to be friendly to all.

The Flat-Coat is a cheerful, devoted companion who requires and appreciates living with and interacting as a member of his family. To reach full potential in any endeavor he absolutely must have a strong personal bond and affectionate individual attention.

Disqualification: *Yellow, cream or any color other than black or liver.*