

THE CHESAPEAKE BAY RETRIEVER

1. *Where do you live? What is your occupation? How many years in dogs?*
2. *Do you have any hobbies or interests apart from breeding and showing dogs?*
3. *What's it like living/working with a Chesapeake Bay Retriever?*
4. *Can you speak to the breed's size and substance?*
5. *How does the breed's silhouette differ from that of its Retriever cousins?*
6. *Can you describe the Chessie's ideal expression? Ideal coat?*
7. *Do judges (and breeders) ever betray a preference for color?*
8. *Any words about this Retriever's temperament?*
9. *The AKC standard has seven disqualifications. Care to elaborate?*
10. *Are there any well-kept secrets about the Chesapeake Bay Retriever?*
11. *Are there any current "trends" in breeding that should be continued or should be stopped?*
12. *Is there anything else you'd like to share about the breed? Please elaborate.*

KAREN ANDERSON

I live in Monrovia, Maryland. I am secretary for my husband's business. I have been in dogs for 57 years and in Chesapeake Bay Retrievers for 51 years.

We (my husband and I) purchased our first Chesapeake Bay Retriever from Roedown Farm in Davidson, Maryland. He was from the old Native Shore lines and our foundation bitch was from Eloise Heller Cherry's Baronland Kennels in California. Our kennel name is Chestnut Hills. We have won six American Chesapeake Club National Specialties, produced the number one Champion-producing sire for Chesapeake Bay Retrievers, and have multiple tracking, obedience and working/hunt titles.

Do I have any hobbies or interests apart from breeding and showing dogs? I was a Master Falconer and I still enjoy bonsai trees.

What's it like living/working with a Chesapeake Bay Retriever? Chesapeake Bay Retrievers are a part of my family. They are intelligent, devoted, loyal, and protective.

Can I speak to the breed's size and substance? When I look at a Chesapeake in a line of Retrievers I see a burly, full-coated, substantial waterfowl Retriever.

Can I describe the Chessie's ideal expression and coat? Chesapeakes are alert. They have a double coat with a thick undercoat and a harsh outer coat with an oily base that helps protect them from the elements.

Do judges ever betray a preference for color? The majority of judges seem to have a color preference, usually for shades of brown. All the colors, sedge, dead grass and brown should be treated equally.

Any words about this Retriever's temperament? They are not a Retriever for everyone. Most people do not put the time in for proper socialization of their puppy. I believe the breed has received a bad reputation because they are protective of their families and their

family's possessions, just as if they were used to guard the hunter's camps years ago.

The AKC standard has seven disqualifications. Care to elaborate? The disqualification for undershot, overshot or any deformity lacks an explanation for what clarifies the deformity. I have always understood that to mean deformities of the dog in general.

DIANE BAKER

Diane Baker has been involved in purebred dogs since the early 1980s. As a professional handler, she has finished or specialed dogs in all seven AKC Groups. A career highlight was winning the Working Group at Westminster Kennel Club in 1999 with Bernese Mountain Dog, Ch. Mentmore's Windy Meadow. Breeding under the "Sandbar" prefix, her career in Chesapeakes has spanned well over three decades. She has bred, owned and/or handled three National Specialty winners, multiple Best in Show dogs as well as many dogs that have risen to the number one spot. Sandbar continues to produce Champions, Hunt Test and performance-titled dogs.

I currently own and operate Paws Here, a full service pet resort in the Illinois Valley west of Chicago. We board, groom, train and show dogs. The resort is also the home of Sandbar Chesapeake Bay Retrievers and Xoloitcuintli. I also have a home on the Virginia side of the Chesapeake Bay. Much of my youth was spent watching Chesapeakes work in their native territory. It's my pleasure to still be able to maintain my family home there. My first litter of purebred dogs was almost four decades ago. They were 13" Beagles. After seeing a pair of Rottweilers at a horse farm I worked at, I acquired a few and developed an interest in showing and in obedience. My involvement with Chessies came soon thereafter when I was hired to show a Special that later became the foundation bitch for Sandbar.

Hobbies and interests apart from breeding and showing dogs? After many years as a professional horseman, I still maintain an active interest in horses and ponies.

What's it like living and working with a Chesapeake Bay Retriever? The characteristics that make a Chessie a superior hunting dog can make living with them a pleasant challenge. They are problem solvers, tenacious, protective and driven. As a market hunter, these are all traits that made them exceptional at their job. They have a "never give up" attitude. The same things that keep them going after waterfowl and upland birds despite the most adverse conditions are also the traits that keep them going after your trash can after you told them no repeatedly! You must be a creative trainer. If you're looking for a devoted worker, this breed has no equal. We say they are like the Marine Corps: "First in and last out!"

Can I speak to the breed's size and substance? Chessies have a fairly wide range in ideal height from the bottom of bitches (21") to the top of dogs (26"). This range allows for Chesapeakes to be a working Retriever in a variety of different scenarios and conditions. A smaller dog may be well-suited to a tree stand in a Louisiana swamp, while a bigger dog might be necessary to clear cut corn stalks in the frozen plains of the upper Midwest. It is most important that this breed maintains its versatile and functional working characteristics. Proportion and substance are also important factors. A Chesapeake should be a powerful dog, showing no sign >

CHESAPEAKE BAY RETRIEVER Q&A

of weakness. It is vital to have sufficient substance to bust through the thickest cover and ice, and power through the highest waves and brutal winds. Substance should not be so much, though, as to inhibit agility, dexterity or endurance.

How does the breed's silhouette differ from that of its Retriever cousins? One of the distinct features of a Chessie is its outline. Our standard calls for the rear of the dog to be as high or a trifle higher than the dog is at the shoulders. This is an important feature of breed type and makes the outline of a Chesapeake very unique and easily identifiable from a distance.

Can I describe the Chessie's ideal expression and coat? A Chessie's expression should reflect its intelligence and bright, happy disposition. This breed also has an intensity when on task that can be seen in its facial expressions and demeanor. This should not be confused with unhappiness or aggression. A surly temperament should not be excused. However, the Chesapeake is a stoic breed and can appear quite serious when working. This can betray their often clownish personality and very light-hearted sense of humor. Coat! This is one of the most important factors of a Chesapeake. Unfortunately, it is also one of the most misunderstood aspects of the breed. The breed's founders developed the unique coat of this dog to weather the extremely harsh conditions of the Chesapeake Bay. Because of close proximity to the icy Atlantic and prevailing weather patterns, the weather on the Bay can be very brutal. Native waterman found many Retrievers of their day lacking in the ability to hold up to the rigors required for long hours and harsh conditions required of a market hunter. This was a blue collar Retriever, not a gentleman's hunting dog. Owners depended on their Chessie to put meat on the table and bring money home from market. It made for long days and sometimes hundreds of retrieves. Endurance and sturdiness was a must. A Chessie might spend the majority of its day in the icy water or on a snowy bank during hunting season. This makes the ability of repel water vital! After a swim, a Chesapeake must be able to shake the majority of water from its coat and be barely moist to the touch. Improper texture, length or volume would render this feature ineffective. Soft and/or profuse coats do not dry properly and leave the animal susceptible to pneumonia or hypothermia. A Chessie's coat should have a wooly undercoat to provide insulation and a top coat that has the tendency to wave (not curl) over the neck, shoulders, back and loins. Side coat can appear to have more or less volume depending on the dog, but it must always have proper texture. The wave of the coat can be loose or more tightly patterned. It can even take on a kinky appearance. When being judged, as long as texture is correct, one style of wave should not be preferred over the other. A coat in correct condition should have sufficient oil to be water-resistant. However, a Chesapeake does not have to have an unpleasant odor to achieve this. Overall, proper coat carries the highest number of points in the positive scale of points as part of our breed standard.

Do judges ever betray preferences for color? Judges and breeders can sometimes have preferences on color. As long as a color is within the allowable range, all should be considered equally. Some breeders have concentrated on certain colors throughout the years and, therefore, you often see a distinctive style that may dominate a color in a particular region. It is therefore hard to say if these style differences account for judges preferences or if it is strictly a color issue. A big area of misconception, however, is the patterns allowed within the breed. There are several allowable patterns: white markings (within very strictly specified areas), stripes (brindle), saddle mark, agouti, tan point and masking. These patterns can overlay any allowable color. Ideally the Chessie is a self-colored dog, meaning one color overall with or without shading of the same color. While judges may have preferences regarding color or patterns, it is important to note that color is accountable for only four points on a 100-point scale. Unfortunately, there have been instances where

judges have opted to express their preferences by disqualifying dogs based on patterns or colors they found objectionable. Judges are instructed that "specimens lacking in breed characteristics are to be disqualified." Note the plural (characteristics). Some judges have used this as a justification for disqualifying dogs with allowable patterns or color. This is a problem.

Lastly, it should be noted regarding patterns and colors, as a working Retriever, a Chessie should blend to their surrounding environment as closely as possible. They should be camouflaged and inconspicuous. When learning the breed, it helps to observe the dogs working in a variety of environments and then apply those mental images when judging in the ring.

A few words about temperament: I spoke a little earlier about temperament but, to expand on it a bit, I find that outside the breed, Chessies are not well understood. You hear quite often that they can be stubborn and difficult and some people express a perception of hardness or sharpness. These are traits that should not be associated with the breed. These dogs are very intelligent and require creative training techniques. They do not typically do well with repetitious pattern training. They learn quickly and bore easily. This is a breed with a very keen sense of fair play. They will accept a justified correction, but will not tolerate constant or unnecessary manhandling. They love their people. They are protective and loyal. They are often indifferent to strangers [since] their people make up the whole of their universe. This leads to a misunderstanding for those who expect all Retrievers to be happy-go-lucky like a Golden or a Lab. Because of the close bond they form and their workmanlike attitude, Chessies see themselves as a partner, not a tool. Truthfully, in most every endeavor, one couldn't ask for a better partner or companion.

The AKC standard has seven disqualifications. Care to elaborate? I think the disqualifications in the breed are pretty clear for the most part. As I mentioned earlier, the disqualification for lack of breed characteristics should not be used as a loophole for personal preferences or agendas. For disqualification, there should be multiple traits and they should be very clearly and easily tied to the breed standard. It is also notable that there is a DQ regarding feathering on the tail or legs over 1-3/4 inches long. Chesaokes should not have feathering of any kind. There are dogs produced that throwback to long-coated ancestors. These dogs are fairly rare and not correct. As breeders we now have a DNA test to help us avoid producing long-coated dogs and as exhibitors they should not ever be presented in the ring.

Are there any well-kept secrets about the Chesapeake Bay Retriever? Chessies are their own best kept secret!

Are there any current "trends" in breeding that should be continued or should be stopped? One of the most important aspects of the breed is its functionality as an all-around, dual-purpose dog. Thankfully, we have not experienced the "split" some other Sporting breeds have gone through. Our show dogs are the same as our working dogs. There is little difference in style or temperament. The same dog can hunt, compete in companion or performance events and still succeed in the show ring. A dog I bred and co-own recently became the only Retriever in history to be a multiple Best in Show winner, AKC Grand Champion, Master Hunter, Qualified All-Age. It is not unusual to see dogs in the show ring with AKC or UKC hunt test titles. Often dogs will hunt during the week and go to shows on the weekend. We have many younger breeders who are following along with this concept. I believe the future looks bright for this great breed!

DYANE BALDWIN

I have bred 191 AKC champion Chesaokes as well as 155 performance titled Chesaokes, including placements in AKC field trials under the Pond Hollow prefix. I have personally trained and

CHESAPEAKE BAY RETRIEVER Q&A

titled dogs in conformation (Group wins and SS wins), obedience (all levels) and hunt tests to SH level. I have edited a book on Chesapeake Bay Retrievers, written on the breed and have given numerous seminars here and abroad. I have judged Chesapeake National Specialties in the US, England and Sweden. I have judged the breed in Ireland, Denmark, Czech Republic and Switzerland as well. I am approved for all Sporting breeds with the AKC. For the American Chesapeake Club I have served in numerous positions; Historian, Club Secretary, Chair of Judges Education, Judges Education Coordinator, and AKC Delegate. In 2018, I was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the club.

I am retired and live in central Pennsylvania on 31 acres that includes a pond for the dogs. 2020 is my 43rd year involved with the Chesapeake and dog competition.

Do I have any hobbies or interests apart from breeding and showing dogs? I have a large garden—flowers and shrubs—and spend a fair amount of time in it. I also enjoy traveling in the US and abroad.

What's it like living/working with a Chesapeake Bay Retriever? Living with a Chesapeake you are well loved, with a golden eye always keeping you in sight. You are never alone. They are intelligent dogs and learn quickly, but bore easily too. You need to be an innovative trainer.

Can I speak to the breed's size and substance? The Chesapeake has a larger size range than the other retriever breeds (21" minimum female; 26" maximum male). This wide size spread is due to the various settings the Chesapeake works in: boats, ponds, large bays and swift big rivers.

How does the breed's silhouette differ from that of its Retriever cousins? The breed has a distinctive underline in comparison to the other Retrievers. There should be an apparent tuck-up in the loin area from underneath. None of the other Retrievers have this obvious tuck-up. They also have two acceptable toplines: level (as high as shoulder) or slight rise to the rear in a steady line from the withers. Unlike several of the other Retrievers, they do not have a prominent projection of the fore-chest bone. It is not a requirement in the standard at all. The legs should be well-placed under the body by correct, sloping shoulders.

Can I describe the Chessie's ideal expression and coat? There is not an ideal expression or coat for the breed. There are a number of coat styles that are equally acceptable—some with more wave than others. The coat must have undercoat that is thick and a somewhat harsh outer coat. There also is a slight oily feel to the coat. Expression is best seen when the dog is working in the field: intensity, alertness and determination. In an everyday setting they look bright and intelligent and aware of all that is going on around them.

Do judges ever betray a preference for color? Sadly, yes. A color preference is not uncommon with judges. Brown is often favored over the sedge (red) and deadgrass (blonde) colors even if the brown is not the same quality. Breeders too can have a preference (brown), but that is not as common as it once was. Most breeders have dogs in all of the color range.

Any words about this Retriever's temperament? They are well-tempered dogs, very devoted to their family. Sensible dogs and usually easy to live with—calm indoors. However, they have a watch dog nature too. As young dogs they must be socialized, trained in obedience, and the owner needs to be in charge. They need to be prepared for the conformation ring. If not, they can be reluctant to be examined and even shy away. Aggression should not be tolerated under any circumstance.

The AKC standard has seven disqualifications. Care to elaborate? Sometimes judges misunderstand the DQ for a tendency to curl all over the body. There may be areas of the coat with a tendency to curl. To be disqualified the tendency must occur all over

the body. A few areas of the coat with a curling tendency is not a disqualification.

Are there any well-kept secrets about the Chesapeake Bay Retriever? The breed is a very loving and devoted companion. You may never be loved by anything as much as your Chesapeake loves you. They often become part of you.

Are there any current "trends" in breeding that should be continued or should be stopped? There has been a trend toward over-angulation in the rear—legs too far back of the dog—and an overly prominent forechest. All those angles fore and aft make a "fancy" dog that is not correct Chesapeake type. The breed is a workman-like dog with moderation and balance. The rear has a well bent stifle, coupled with a medium hock length, creating a broad second thigh. The rear legs should not extend back much farther than the point of the buttock.

JOANN COLVIN



I began in dogs in 1976 and Chesapeakes in 1982. In 1990, I added Pekingese to my household and also showed and bred them. I have had numerous champions in both breeds, and multiple Group Placements, RBIS, and BIS Chesapeakes under the Cal-I-Co kennel prefix.

I began judging in 1998 and judge the Sporting Group, three Toy breeds, Jrs, Misc, and BIS. I am past President of the American Chesapeake Club as well as VP, Board Member, JBEC Chair and Show Committee. I am current VP of my all-breed club, Kanadasaga KC, and I co-chair our show at the Wine Country Circuit in New York. I am an approved mentor for the American Chesapeake Club.

Even though I had thought to downsize on dogs, I discovered I still enjoyed breeding and having my dogs shown. So I have several Chesapeakes at home and share my bed with two Tibetan Spaniels and a very special Chihuahua.

I live in the Finger Lakes region of New York. Currently, I am retired from teaching English. I've been in dogs about 38 years.

Do I have any hobbies or interests apart from breeding and showing dogs? I am a certified End of Life Doula and spend many volunteer hours every week caretaking for hospice patients in our local Care Home.

What's it like living/working with a Chesapeake Bay Retriever? It is much like teaching school. Chesapeakes need to understand what is being asked and why. Each [dog] of the breed is an individual—no two [are] alike.

Can I speak to the breed's size and substance? The breed is moderate. Top of the standard for a male is 26". The weight and bone and substance of the dog should balance with its height. Many people call looking for the "old type" 100-plus pound dog. This was not characteristic and is out of standard.

How does the breed's silhouette differ from that of its Retriever cousins? The Chesapeake has a unique outline. The topline may be level, but may also rise slightly to the rear. This does not read as sway or dip in the back. The underline of the breed differs as there is a distinct tuck up under the loin.

Can I describe the Chessie's ideal expression and coat? A Chesapeake should have an alert, intelligent expression. Although they can be aloof, many display a happy expression and some even smile. The coat has a variety of waving patterns, none preferred. >

CHESAPEAKE BAY RETRIEVER Q&A

They should have a coarse textured outer coat, and a dense and wooly undercoat.

Do judges ever betray a preference for color? There was a time when the preference was for a dark brown dog. This seems to be behind us now, but still it is more difficult to campaign a deadgrass or sedge dog than a brown dog.

Any words about this Retriever's temperament? The owner/trainer needs to be in charge. If not, the Chesapeake will be glad to take the job.

The AKC standard has seven disqualifications. Care to elaborate? Just a couple of points: The DQ for rear dewclaws is not for the dog having had them—it is for the dewclaws not being removed; and the "tendency to curl" refers to actual curls or ringlets—not to a tight wave.

Are there any well-kept secrets about the Chesapeake Bay Retriever? The Chesapeake can be a very soft dog. They take things to heart and never forget.

Are there any current "trends" in breeding that should be continued or should be stopped? We did have some people purposely breeding for long coats. That needed to stop. We also need to retain the working history of this breed and be sure that the dog doesn't become exaggerated or fancy.

BRIAN & ANGIE COX

Brian and Angie got their first Chesapeake in 1982 and have enjoyed much success in conformation, obedience, hunt tests, agility, and rally. With the gracious help of their mentor for many years, Mildred Buchholz, their breeding program has been successful for over 35 years. The Coxes breed a litter every one-two years on average. They breed to continue exhibiting and enjoying their own dogs, but also strive to improve quality with every litter while preserving the attributes of the Chesapeake Bay Retriever based on the standard, and on the intentions as written by the developers of this wonderful breed.

Brian and Angie Cox live in Millington, Tennessee, just north of Memphis. Angie has recently retired after a 41-year multi-faceted career with International Paper Company. Brian is a carpenter by trade and is also retired. We have been breeding Chesapeakes exclusively since 1984.

Do we have any hobbies or interests apart from breeding and showing dogs? Brian enjoys gardening and playing his guitars. Angie likes to travel, and exhibits in obedience, agility, and rally.

What's it like living/working with a Chesapeake Bay Retriever? The Chesapeake is a serious, dedicated, and hard worker as long as the task to be done is made very clear. Clarity in training is key because a dog that is confused about what is being asked of him will make up his own rules and/or become very resistant. He is extremely active in work and play. In the home he is calm, yet the Chesapeake's protective nature can present challenges without proper obedience training. He is mostly calm and content to be your shadow, but always watching for the slightest cue that the next outing is coming.

Can we speak to the breed's size and substance? In the standard there is a large margin for acceptable height in males and females. For males, height to the shoulder should be 23" to 26", and for females, 21" to 24". Substance should indicate strength and power with moderate heaviness in body and bone.

How does the breed's silhouette differ from that of its Retriever cousins? Looking at a correct Chesapeake silhouette, one should be able to see the high ear set and a medium length neck, tapering smoothly into the shoulder. The back is short and well-coupled, with the front and rear showing equal power. What really distinguishes the Chesapeake from other retriever breeds is in both the topline and the underline. The rear may be a trifle higher than

the shoulders. The well-tucked-up flanks should be obvious in the underline which flows smoothly into the loin.

Can we describe the Chessie's ideal expression,? Ideal coat? A Chesapeake's ideal expression is alert, intelligent, and happy. It will often be one that is questioning: "What do you need me to do for you next?" The ideal coat is crisp and harsh to the touch and will spring back when a hand is pressed into it.

Do judges ever betray a preference for color? Yes. Although everyone is entitled to their preferences, the standard states, "Any color of brown, sedge, or deadgrass is acceptable, self-colored Chesapeakes being preferred. One color is not to be preferred over another." We are seeing less bias lately with judges, but there are some strong differences of opinion among breeders regarding markings in self-colored dogs and other colors. Our feeling is that color should be the last thing to be considered when breeding or judging.

Any words about this Retriever's temperament? Chesapeakes are headstrong at times, yet emotionally sensitive. They are protective, perceptive, dedicated, and happy to please. The best, well-rounded Chesapeake has a clear understanding of what the rules are and lives in the home as a family member.

The AKC standard has seven disqualifications. Care to elaborate? Only on the first one, as the others are fairly clear: "Specimens lacking in breed characteristics." When considering whether to DQ an exhibit, judges should keep in mind the distinguishing breed characteristics: Eye color, topline, and coat; all of these are described in the standard. If a dog is lacking in more than one of these, it should be DQ'd. Otherwise, no placement should be given, or a ribbon should be withheld at the judge's discretion.

Are there any well-kept secrets about the Chesapeake Bay Retriever? No secrets here!

Are there any current "trends" in breeding that should be continued or should be stopped? We are seeing dogs that are too heavy in bone. They should be athletic and powerful with moderate bone for efficiency and endurance. We are also seeing less angle in rears. Stifles should be "well angulated."

We'd also like to share about the breed that Chesapeakes can be superb working companions and devoted family dogs. When not working, this breed is most content in the home or anywhere the owners choose to be. They can also be formidable and protective to a fault without assertive leadership, proper training, and complete assimilation to family life. Chesapeakes do not do well in a kennel or living outside or away from their family.

GINA DOWNIN



PHOTO BY JANE PAPPILER

Gina Downin lives in the Chesapeake Bay watershed in Maryland. She breeds the occasional litter under the name Weatherdeck Chesapeakes. Dogs of her breeding have competed in conformation, obedience, rally, hunt tests, field trials, working tests, barn hunt, and dock diving. Weatherdeck Chesapeakes have proven to be valued hunting companions as well.

I live in Maryland where I teach English Language Learners in my neighborhood elementary school. I've been enjoying the world of exhibiting, competing, and breeding Chesapeake Bay Retrievers for 18 years.

Do I have any hobbies or interests apart from breeding and showing dogs? Our dogs are central to so much that we do for fun and enjoyment. As a family, we spend our time hiking, camping,

CHESAPEAKE BAY RETRIEVER Q&A

sailing, and gardening. Throughout my life, there has always been a dog by my side for all of my sweetest memories.

What's it like living/working with a Chesapeake Bay Retriever? You can't make any swift turns or changes in direction when you live with a Chesapeake. Where you go, they go. After a momentary stop at the kitchen sink or in the garden, you'll find a Chesapeake head resting upon your foot or leaning on your leg. They don't stick with you like glue out of any insecurity, but more because of a sense of partnership that is integral to who they are, and that sense of partnership is what makes them such an incredible working dog. ChesaPeakes need a job and if you don't give them one, they will become self-employed. It's best to know this about them from the outset so that you can put their work ethic to good use. Thankfully, ChesaPeakes are quite open-minded about what they are willing to do for work. Their specialty, of course, is retrieving waterfowl in brutally cold, icy conditions. However, give them other opportunities for physical exercise, mental stimulation, and teamwork and they will embrace anything you endeavor to try together. I think that one thing that most would find surprising about this breed is that although they approach all activity with such enthusiasm, they have an "off" switch that allows them to be easily integrated into family life in the home.

Can I speak to the breed's size and substance? Our breed standard allows for a range of sizes for good reason. ChesaPeakes are used as working gundogs in a variety of conditions ranging from working out of a small skiff to retrieving from choppy waters with strong currents or tides. We allow enough room in the standard for breeders to produce dogs that are best suited for different demands. Though we do not have a size disqualification in our breed standard, we do say, "Oversized or undersized animals are to be severely penalized." We want to avoid any tendency to breed to the extremes of size while still allowing for some variation.

How does the breed's silhouette differ from that of its Retriever cousins? When you view a Chesapeake from the side, you'll see flanks well-tucked up and the chest will be both deep and round. Our standard describes a topline that can be level or can show a slight rise from the shoulder to the hindquarters. Either topline is correct, but in either case the back should be strong.

Can I describe the Chessie's ideal expression? Ideal coat? Our breed is known for an intense gaze that can sometimes convey both a seriousness of focus and a deep affection.

We have a number of different styles of coat that are acceptable. Variations in length (to a degree), coarseness, and amount of wave are all considered acceptable. The ideal coat is dictated by the qualities of the coat that will protect a working gundog in cold, icy water. Most important is the interplay between the undercoat and harsh outer coat that will minimize the water absorbed and carried by the coat while also providing insulation. More coat is not always better. Our standard says, "Hair on the face and legs should be very short and straight with a tendency to wave on the shoulders, neck, back and loins only."

Do judges ever betray a preference for color? Our standard is very clear. "One color is not to be preferred over another." A few breeders may appear to have preferences for color because their lines produce them, but I think we are all in agreement that color is not nearly as important as other aspects of the dog. For example, the texture and quality of the coat is so much more important than the color. Judges tend to see a lot more brown dogs in the show ring and I do think that sometimes they struggle a bit with deadgrass and sedge dogs. In our Judges Education programs, I know we do a lot to open judges' eyes to the variety of colors that are acceptable in our breed. Our standard says, "The color of the Chesapeake Bay Retriever must be nearly that of its working surroundings as possible." People hunt over ChesaPeakes in many different environments from snowy fields, to icy waters, marshes, and fields of

corn stubble. Certainly, some hunters have a preference for color because they want a dog that fits their hunting environment.

Any words about this Retriever's temperament? Ours has been a protective breed from the beginning. They require a great deal of exposure to different environments with all manner of distraction and stimulation. One gets the very best out of a Chesapeake when they have provided that critical socialization and have taken the time to train, teach the values of teamwork, and form an affectionate, trusting bond. With that foundation laid, a Chesapeake will be your most devoted friend, protector, partner, and comic relief.

The AKC standard has seven disqualifications. Care to elaborate? The disqualifications in the Chesapeake Bay Retriever breed standard focus on function and type. Incorrect bites and rear dew claws can interfere with the ability of the dog to perform its function. Coats that are too curly and too long stray from breed type (and can interfere with function). A Chesapeake that has those traits can start to look like another breed. The same is true for our disqualifications for color. A dog that is black or has too much white can easily be mistaken for another breed.

Are there any well-kept secrets about the Chesapeake Bay Retriever? Some may find a Chesapeake to be a challenging dog to live with, but those of us in the know have learned that their intelligence, work ethic, and devotion to their people are the perfect ingredients for a deep partnership that is unparalleled.

Are there any current "trends" in breeding that should be continued or should be stopped? On a positive note, I see more of our breeders engaging in various dog sports in addition to conformation. This shows a commitment to our breed standard and to the working abilities of our dogs. We are very proud of the fact that ChesaPeakes can compete at high levels in so many disciplines and we have a small army of breeders that is working hard to prove this to the world.

LINDA HARGER

I've owned, bred, trained and competed with the Chesapeake in conformation, field trials and hunt tests, dabbled in obedience competition (hard to do with the full-time schedule), dock diving, etc. I hunt my dogs on the off-season and they live as house dogs. I've bred and/or made five dual champions, five more field trial titled dogs, many bench champions with QAA status and several hunt test titles, many more with just CHs and lots of happy family companion hunting dogs. I'm very active in the field trial sport as a competitor, judge and officer of several clubs, including a tenure as president of the NARC and of the national breed club, the American Chesapeake Club. Dogs, and specifically the Chesapeake, are my way of life.

I live in Payette, Idaho. I'm retired from a pet boarding business. I've had ChesaPeakes since 1972; my first puppy was my "engagement ring" as I didn't want a diamond.

Do I have any hobbies or interests apart from breeding and showing dogs? I actually do more training and competing in Retriever field trials than I show in conformation, but I do show all the dogs I own. I'm a voracious reader, art collector and love traveling.

What's it like living/working with a Chesapeake Bay? Not sure how to answer that as it's a choice I made a long time ago and have never looked back. My life centers around the dogs, so I can't imagine not having them. In general, they are a "hoot." They are intelligent, happy clown-like characters who work hard for me, but never give up their own personalities.

Can I speak to the breed's size and substance? The breed standard uses the word "moderate" and I think that is very important. A moderately sized animal of great athleticism is an asset in all we ask them to do. They are healthy and, in my opinion, >

CHESAPEAKE BAY RETRIEVER Q&A

stronger than an oversized dog. They have plenty of substance without being overdone.

How does the breed's silhouette differ from that of its Retriever cousins? It's common knowledge that the silhouette of the Chesapeake differs in the rise of the hips, so they do not have a level topline. I also think they are shown for the most part in better field weight than other breeds and can carry it off because of their substance.

Can I describe the Chessie's ideal expression and coat? Direct, happy, a little devilish, hearts on their shoulders. The standard describes their coat very well, but words don't do it justice. The waves/curl down their backs spilling on their sides etc is, again, in my opinion, beautiful. Heavy undercoating beneath the courser top coat gives the breed an edge in the extreme winter hunting conditions and adds to their overall great appearance.

Do judges ever betray a preference for color? Of course they do. It's human nature to like certain things, but the good breeders look for the dog that best fits their ideal, and color should be considered only if two dogs are identical in meeting the more important criteria.

Judges, on the other hand, are accused of liking only certain colors, but I've only witnessed this once in all these years. I'm comfortable showing under anyone. Besides, if the animal is the closest to the standard on a given day one hopes it will be awarded the points.

Any words about this Retriever's temperament? Overall the breed is very much improved through generations of better, more intuitive breeding. They are powerful both mentally and physically, so they generally don't fit with someone wanting a placid house pet. They are active and need both physical and mental stimulation. However, as a person having been in the pet industry as both a trainer and a caretaker, any dog that is not trained and treated fairly can be a problem animal—it is not breed-specific in any way.

The AKC standard has seven disqualifications. Care to elaborate? I think they are clear.

Are there any well-kept secrets about the Chesapeake Bay Retriever? Yes, and I want it to stay that way so they do not become the next "best thing." Too much popularity has destroyed too many fine breeds in this country.

Are there any current "trends" in breeding that should be continued or should be stopped? Again, overall, there are many good breeders doing the breed justice. Those who are in it for the money (and all breeds have this type) use much less discriminating criteria for their breeding decisions.

I do not like the increase in size and some of the overdone heads, and I think this trend would be eliminated if judges paid attention to the word "moderate."

I'd also like to share that this is a fascinating breed and are subject to a lot of "wives tales" but, again, I like them the way they are. So, if you love the breed, great, and if you want a different breed, that's great too.

POLLY HENSHAW

I live in Mattapoisett, Massachusetts. I am a retired toy store owner and I been in dogs for 50+ years and have owned Chesa-peakes for 44 years.

Do I have any hobbies or interests apart from breeding and showing dogs? Yes, gardening and horses.

What's it like living/working with a Chesapeake Bay Retriever? There's never a dull moment. It's challenging and very satisfying.

Can I speak to the breed's size and substance? They are a medium size dog of good substance and bone. They should give the impression of fitness and confidence.

How does the breed's silhouette differ from that of its Retriever cousins? The silhouette can be slightly higher in the rear, but not a soft or weak topline, and could have a bit more of a tuck-up.

Can I describe the Chessie's ideal expression and coat? A Chessie should have a kind eye with no hint of fear. Coat should have a down-like undercoat and a relatively harsh wavy top coat.

Do judges ever betray a preference for color? Yes. I think some do, but you see very little of it in the ring.

Any words about this Retriever's temperament? The Chesapeake is strong and bold in both mind and body. You rarely see an aggressive Chesapeake nowadays, but, unfortunately, they have a bad reputation. As with any breed, a lot has to do with how they are raised. They are inherently protective; this trait does not need to be encouraged.

The AKC standard has seven disqualifications. Care to elaborate? The only disqualification that I see overlooked is coat. I feel the coat is something that judges need to understand better. The wave is not supposed to cover the whole body and more is not better.

Are there any well-kept secrets about the Chesapeake Bay Retriever? The Chesapeake itself is a well-kept secret.

Are there any current "trends" in breeding that should be continued or should be stopped? I think most Chesapeake breeders are pretty much on point. I don't see any specific trends.

BETSY HORN HUMER



My husband, Rupe, and I have a house on 21 acres on the water in Virginia on the Eastern Shore between the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. We moved from New Jersey in 1999 and like to say that we brought our dogs "back to their roots." I am a retired elementary school media specialist. Eastern Waters' Kennels was established by my parents, Janet and Dan Horn. I am second generation "dog person" and have lived with Chesa-peakes most of my life. I judge Sporting and Herding Groups, Obedience and Rally. I still breed occasionally, and participate in obedience, rally, hunt tests, tracking, agility and conformation. We have had National Specialty Winners, Group-placing dogs and produced those that have earned a MACH, OTCH and MH titles. Our dogs have titles at both ends.

Do I have any hobbies or interests apart from breeding and showing dogs? In addition to showing, breeding and judging dogs, I am an avid gardener with a huge Victory Garden this year, play a little tennis, and spend time with seven grandchildren when we can.

What's it like living/working with a Chesapeake Bay Retriever? Chesa-peakes enjoy being busy and having a job to do. Chesa-peakes are extremely devoted. They want to be with you and will follow you from room to room. They are very intelligent and once they learn something, don't repeat it again and again. If you do, they will think they are doing something wrong and will create another way to do the exercise or task.

Can I speak to the breed's size and substance? Height specifications for males are 23"-26" and females are 21"-24". There is the possibility of a five inch difference between dogs in the ring. Sizes may vary in different parts of the country. Don't dismiss a 26" dog from competition when the other males are 24" and he looks out of place. There is no height preference and no DQ for height.

The breed should be in fit condition, athletic and also agile. Although powerfully built, it should not be excessive.

CHESAPEAKE BAY RETRIEVER Q&A

Chesapeakes are a moderate breed and should be able to do the job they were bred to do.

How does the breed's silhouette differ from that of its Retriever cousins? The other retriever breeds all have a level topline. The Chesapeake has hindquarters that are "as high as or a trifle higher than the shoulders..." This means the topline may be level, or you will see a slight rise over the loin. Most have a rise over the loin. The dog should not be swaybacked.

Can I describe the Chessie's ideal expression and coat? When you look at a Chesapeake head, you should see a look of intelligence in their eyes. Sometimes a lighter yellow eye will look intense. A relaxed eye will have a friendly expression. The breed may be reserved with those they don't know, but are rarely aggressive.

The coat should be harsh and crisp to the touch. A correct undercoat is dense and wooly. The combination will result in a coat that has a full or plush appearance. The coat should fit the dog like a jacket. The coat is wavy on the back, neck, and along the sides. Hair coat on the face, skull and legs is straight. The coat should not be back-brushed or filled with product. This is a wash-and-wear breed.

Do judges ever betray a preference for color? Exhibitors used to keep a list of "brown dog" judges and also one for those who would place deadgrass colors. Due to more judges education where it is stressed that there is no preferred color in the breed standard, most judges no longer ignore sedge and deadgrass Chesapeakes. Some breeders have a color preference. There is nothing I enjoy more than a litter with puppies that range from deadgrass to dark brown and maybe even a sedge puppy or two. I have owned all colors.

Any words about this Retriever's temperament? Chesapeakes are very intelligent. Sometimes they have a reputation for being stubborn. You may have to convince them that doing a task was their idea in order to get them to do it. Chesapeakes are physically tough, but mentally they are very sensitive. You can crush them with a harsh word. They may be reserved with strangers, but once they know you, you will be remembered until the next time you meet. They are devoted to their owners and families. They will be protective when necessary.

The AKC standard has seven disqualifications. Care to elaborate? Due to the variety of breeds that were used to develop the Chesapeake there are many recessives that may crop up when breeding. The list of disqualifications is to eliminate these faults from our breed, such as long-coats, rear dewclaws, and too much white in specified areas. Bad bites can pop up anywhere. If a Chesapeake Bay Retriever has any black patches, it is not purebred. Genetically, if the dog has black in its coat, the nose would also be black.

Are there any well-kept secrets about the Chesapeake Bay Retriever? The Chesapeake is not the breed for everyone. It would be a difficult "first" dog for many individuals. Their high level of intelligence can lead to dominance issues over their owner. The owner must take the time to train their dog to ensure that the dog understands and respects the person in charge. They are independent thinkers, which goes back to their original purpose: retrieving and protecting waterfowl for market hunters on the Chesapeake Bay.

Are there any current "trends" in breeding that should be continued or should be stopped? There are examples of our breed in the show ring today that do not have adequate angulation front and/or rear. The ideal dog should be balanced. Bad fronts are a real problem with short upper arms and straight shoulders. When this is compounded with a rear that is over-angulated, the result is a dog that does not move soundly. The rear compensates which creates an interesting picture: the rear legs tend to go in a circle, rather than drive ahead. There are some rears that are over-extended. As a result, the outline and proportion of the Chesapeake is not correct. We are looking for balance. The prow or forechest is not mentioned in our standard. Obviously, it does exist to some point. A prominent forechest is not required. Chests are to be deep and wide. This is

to provide space for lung capacity when swimming and running. Breeders have been working very hard to maintain the outline and general appearance of our breed. It has not gone through the dramatic changes that both Labrador and Golden Retrievers have. Just look at pictures that were taken 30-40 years ago of the popular retriever breeds. They have changed tremendously. Chesapeakes have not, and we don't want to see that happen with our breed.

MICHELLE & DAVE KEEHN



We have owned Chesapeakes since 1994. Our Kennel name is Dusty Rose Chesapeakes after our foundation dogs. We are very active with our dogs competing, and have titled dogs in conformation, obedience and performance events. We have several dogs with multiple titles in different disciplines. Our kennel is small; we only have four dogs living with us. We do have some co-owned dogs. We breed on a limited basis, having a litter or two a year, and sometimes skipping a year.

We live in Mayville, Michigan. Michelle works for the State of Michigan at a Psychiatric hospital. Dave is a self-employed dog trainer, CGC evaluator. We have 26 years in dogs.

Do we have any hobbies or interests apart from breeding and showing dogs? Hunting, hunt tests, and boating.

What's it like living/working with a Chesapeake Bay Retriever? Sometimes challenging, but always fun.

Can we speak to the breed's size and substance? They should be agile, powerful, muscular and moderate in size.

How does the breed's silhouette differ from that of its Retriever cousins? Hindquarters as high or a trifle higher than the shoulders, flanks well tucked-up.

Can we describe the Chessie's ideal expression and coat? Expression should be happy and purposeful. They should have a harsh outer coat and wooly undercoat. The coat will have some oil in it.

Do judges ever betray a preference for color? I believe everyone probably has a color preference, but color should never be placed higher than correct conformation. There are only two disqualifications for color: black (which I have never seen) and white on any other part of the body [except] breast, belly, toes and back of the feet. Here is a statement from the Standard: "The color of the Chesapeake Bay Retriever must be nearly that of its working surroundings as possible. Any color of brown, sedge, or deadgrass is acceptable, self-colored Chesapeakes being preferred. One color is not to be preferred over another."

Any words about this Retriever's temperament? We find Chesapeake Bay Retrievers to be very loyal, intelligent, and should be protective, but never aggressive.

The AKC standard has seven disqualifications. Care to elaborate? Of the seven disqualifications the first one, "Specimens lacking in breed characteristics," is probably the most confusing. We were always taught that it is a dog lacking in characteristics as in multiple. Just for an example, a Chesapeake lacking in breed characteristics might not have a proper tuck-up, will have lips that are pendulous and ears that are large and not set well-up on the head. >

CHESAPEAKE BAY RETRIEVER Q&A

Are there any well-kept secrets about the Chesapeake Bay Retriever? They're smarter than most people. All kidding aside, the Chesapeake Bay Retriever may not be for everyone. We feel it is important for anyone who is interested in a Chesapeake to take the time to do some research, contact breeders and actually go out and visit so you can meet the dogs and see if they are a breed you can live with. Talking on the phone and looking at pictures, you only get a portion of the story. You need to meet and greet this breed in person.

Are there any current "trends" in breeding that should be continued or should be stopped? It is very important for the Chesapeake Bay Retriever to be a moderate dog. We are seeing the tendency to go bigger with people believing bigger is better. Also, we are seeing a generic retriever, just an average or mediocre dog. Breeders should always work toward the standard.

A couple of things that we would like to share: The misconception that you can only have a Chesapeake Bay Retriever if you hunt. Although they do enjoy hunting, there are other things you can do. They will sometimes need a job, but that job does not have to be hunting. This breed is very smart and can become bored easily. Mix things up in training and find something they like to do. Just running or retrieving is not enough, you will have to stimulate their brains. Lastly, Chesapeake Bay Retrievers do not like to be corrected for things they do not understand. In our dealings with the Chesapeake, we find they like things very black and white, no grey area. "Yes" means yes and "No" means no. Example: If you do not want your Chesapeake on the furniture, don't let them on the furniture.

KATHLEEN LUTHY

Alan grew up on the Eastern Shore of Maryland hunting ducks and geese on family farm lands since he was "yeah high to a tadpole." Alan always wanted a polished retriever when he grew up because, as he puts it, "I was the dog" when he was a kid. "Alan, go fetch the bird," was often heard on hunting outings. When Alan tried to train his first hunting dog (and Kathy's first show dog), CH HRCH Kirchner's Bluewater Tug, SH, he had to learn how the hard way. There were no how-to DVDs or videos back then. Most of the available books back then were written for dogs much less sensitive than his dog. There was a lot of trial and error along the way and "Abby" never earned the coveted MH title. However, her daughter, CH HRCH Rippling Waters Sea Sprite, MH, MNR, went on to not only title MH, but to pass two Master Nationals. The canine overachiever baton has been handed down ever since.

I grew up in a variety of places as Dad was an Air Force Civil Servant. We always had a dog growing up and I lived with, and learned from, many different breeds. I was always fascinated by all animals, but especially dogs. I married my college sweetheart and, with Alan being active duty Air Force, we moved around a bit. Our first dog as a married couple was a non-loyal and anything but brave, backyard bred Golden Retriever. She was very loving, but I was looking for a dog breed that would be fabulous with our young children and all their friends, [yet] athletic and protective enough to accompany me on my five mile, solitary runs. Abby fit that to a T. When our children were very young, I was a stay-at-home mom who needed an outlet. My beautiful dog, Abby, and I entered the wonderful world of dog shows. She finished in eight shows flat, despite me being a newby, a totally inexperienced owner-handler. We then went on to earn Working Dog titles, the CD Obedience title and hunt test titles. Abby could, and wanted to do, whatever I wanted to do with her. I was hooked for life!

To date, our kennel, Rippling Waters Chesapeakes, has produced more dogs that have earned both the AKC show Championship title as well as the Master Hunter title than any other

Chesapeake kennel. We are very proud to have bred, owned, trained and handled one of only three Chesapeakes to have earned the MNH4 title (qualifying at four different Master Nationals). Kathy has earned the Master National's Women's Challenge Trophy with HRCH Rippling Waters Mo Sprite, MH, MNH4. If I am not mistaken, this is the only Chesapeake team to have achieved this award. Alan has qualified CH HRCH Rippling Waters Sea Sprite, MH, MNR at two Master Nationals. He has done the same with Sprite's other daughter, CH HRCH Rippling Waters Seabiscuit, MH, MNR, WDQ. Both of us have shown and titled our homebred dogs in conformation, and trained and titled our dogs to all levels of hunt test titles. We have also bred two #1 top Agility Chesapeakes in the country. Several Rippling Waters dogs have gone on to earn the UKC's Grand Hunting Retriever Champion title. Our dog, CH HRCH Rippling Waters Purple Haze, MH, WDQ has been listed as the Hunting Retriever Magazine's historical top-producing Chesapeake Bay Retriever sire for many years running. Our current Special, GCH CH Rippling Waters Brown Bart, JH has a Senior pass and is also a multiple Group placer. Three of our Champion females are progressing in both field training as well as pursuing show careers. When Kathy gets a really nice conformation prospect in for training, whether from our bloodlines or not, she encourages the owners to allow her to enter their dogs for show. Although not professional show handlers, we have finished several dogs not our own, and always encourage every Chesapeake owner we run across to participate in both field and show events. If people express an interest in a sport in which we do not ourselves compete, we do our best to direct them to the resources and connections necessary to pursue those interests. Today's Chesapeake Bay Retriever is often not just a "Dual-purpose dog," but a "Multi-purpose dog." There are so many AKC sports for people to participate in with their CBR. The breed is so intelligent and active that they excel in many disciplines. In other words, we have found our perfect breed and have "gone to the dogs—from which there is no coming back."

My husband, Alan, and I live in Crestview, Florida. I am a dog trainer. My area of expertise is training for hunting and hunt tests—I also train basic obedience. My husband is a civilian attorney for the US Air Force. We purchased our first Chesapeake Bay Retriever in 1990. We both have lived with dogs all of our lives.

My husband loves gardening, reading and keeping fit. I love to take daily walks with my dogs—anywhere from three to six miles per day. I also love to read. Both of us compete in hunting tests and are AKC hunt test judges. Both of us love to travel.

Living with a Chesapeake is never boring. They are active, inquisitive, protective, loyal, and extremely intelligent. They require both physical and mental stimulation daily. They need a firm, but fair owner who is willing to be boss, but not too harsh. They respect authority, but will take advantage of a person who isn't willing to take on the "alpha" role in the household. One should never encourage a Chesapeake to be overly protective. Rather, owners should introduce puppies to many different people so that the dog learns that people are great. Chesapeakes are amazing at reading a situation and will protect their people if that is what is required. It is never necessary to train a Chesapeake for protection. They simply just "know" if there is a need to protect. If an owner encourages aggressive behavior, that puppy will assume that is what the owner wants and will grow up aggressive. One must be careful in raising a Chesapeake. It is acceptable for the breed to be super people friendly and also to be aloof with strangers. Either is okay—overly protective is not okay. Lots of socialization to people, places, things and other dogs is a must. Also be very aware of what the dog is learning—they are constantly watching and learning—even learning things you don't necessarily want them to learn—like how to spell certain words like "ball" (another story). Chesapeakes do best as a member of the family rather than simply being a kennel dog.

CHESAPEAKE BAY RETRIEVER Q&A

They can indeed be trained by someone other than a family member, but the trainer must take the time to develop a trusting relationship with the dog.

Training a Chesapeake is also never boring. A successful Chesapeake trainer needs to be both willing and able to get creative in their approach and also be willing to spend the time to “teach, teach, teach” with positive reinforcement and lots of praise. Never expect a Chesapeake to learn simply with force. If a Chesapeake doesn’t understand what is expected, they tend to get really worried as their primary motivation is to please their people. Once they get worried, they tend to shut down. Many people erroneously misinterpret that as the dog being stubborn. Where other retriever breeds may bolt or roll over—both behaviors that are easily understood as worry behaviors—Chesapeakes will often freeze in place. I believe this is the source for their reputation as being stubborn. Whereas Labrador Retrievers (the most popular retriever breed and, therefore, the easiest with which to make comparisons) generally tend to be rote learners, Chesapeakes are problem solvers. So although both need to be progressed in training by following certain steps, they often learn in different ways. This is where creativity on the part of the trainer comes in handy. In certain training situations, the Chessie may see no sense in doing things the way he/she is “expected” to perform. If one asks a Labrador to perform a very repetitive task, the Lab doesn’t seem to question why. A Chesapeake will look at the task and think, “I know a better, more efficient way.” Thus creating a problem for the trainer. I will use a hunting training concept as an illustration: Running a shoreline blind is a ridiculous concept in that both Chessies and people can immediately see that running the bank (i.e. “cheating”) is far more expedient. However, the expectations in a test are that the dog stays perhaps just a foot off shore, but stays in the water, all the way to the bird. This demonstrates the handler’s “control” over the dog. Control is a good thing. So, the key to properly teach a Chesapeake to “not cheat” is to show them that staying in the water is fun, but running the shoreline is not. We use lots of “happy bumpers” in training. Doing the “wrong” thing isn’t so much fun, but doing the “right” thing not only makes the trainer super happy, it is also lots of fun. Keep in mind, a Chesapeake will deep down want to please the boss. So as long as they understand what is expected, they will do their best to please even if it makes zero sense to them. Too much correction and not enough fun can cause the Chesapeake to become demoralized and, therefore, appear disinterested in their work. It’s the trainer’s job to preserve a positive attitude while insisting upon the expected behavior. In other words, “I am boss, you are not, but we can and should have fun together.”

Our breed standard includes a bitch as small as 21 inches and a male as large as a 26 inches—and everything in between. Judges should never have a size preference as long as the dog is in standard! We have had a 21.25 inch Group-Placing /Master Hunter bitch and we also have a multiple Group-Placing dog that is almost 26 inches and that is also well on his way to his Senior Hunter tile. Both were/are correct to standard. There is a valid reason for inclusion of such size differences. The Chesapeake Bay Retriever is first and foremost a hunting breed. If a hunter hunts primarily ducks out of a small pirogue in the south and needs to haul the dog into the boat after every retrieve, then the smaller dog would be practical. If a hunter hunts geese or swan in ice-covered, swift-running rivers up north and needs to have a dog that can confidently and reliably bring in large, aggressive cripples, then a larger dog would better meet his/her needs. I will say it again—the Chesapeake is first and foremost a hunting breed. There are a variety of hunting situations and habitats around the US. Hunters should choose a breeding that is most likely to produce the size most practical for how the dog will be hunted. Twenty-one inches is terrific, but so is 26 inches.

As for substance, judges should keep firmly in mind that the CBR breed standard describes a strong, athletic, well-balanced dog. Dogs should neither have so much substance as to look like a Working breed or so little substance as to resemble a sighthound. They should be strong and athletic enough to readily hunt in really harsh conditions and bring in cripples. To assume a Chesapeake should look like a wavy-coated version of what is often seen being shown in the Labrador ring these days is absolutely wrong. The shorter legs and extremely stocky build is not the correct build of a proper Chesapeake. A more moderate build with a proportioned length of leg allows for stamina and efficiency of movement. Neither should a Chesapeake be too thin-boned and leggy as to appear weak. Again, one should be looking for moderation, strength, proportion, and stamina.

Silhouette: Standing still—more substantial than breeds used primarily for upland work like the Curly-Coated Retriever or Flat-Coated Retriever, but more “tuck-up” and leaner and more length of leg than the typical show Labrador Retriever; far larger than a Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever. Body should be neither cobby nor roached. Tail should be straight or slightly curved. In motion, a properly constructed Chesapeake should be so strong and effortless in side gait that they appear to “float.” The topline can either be level or have a slight rise to the rear. Puppies often have a more accentuated rise. However, judges should be careful on this aspect of our breed standard as well. Too much of a rise is not correct. I once had a judge tell me that what was wrong with my dog was that her topline was not like a ski slope—that judge clearly misunderstood our standard. A “ski-slope” topline would not be structurally sound and would likely lead to injuries if the dog was hunted hard.

Ideal expression: One of happy confidence and friendliness. Some Chessies can appear so happy and confident that almost anyone can see the underlying clown or mischievous nature. The also totally acceptable “aloof” Chesapeake will be directing 100% of his/her confidence, happiness and attention on his/her owner or handler while politely ignoring any judge or stranger.

Ideal coat: A proper coat is probably the hardest thing for most people—including judges—to understand. It would be terrific if all potential judges were required to take a water hose to different types of coats and see which were more water-resistant. What looks “pretty and really wavy” may or may not actually be a correct coat. We should not have straight coats like Labradors nor should we have soft, overly curly coats like Curly-Coated Retrievers. As our breed standard dictates: A Chesapeake coat should have a dense, woolly undercoat with a harsh, wavy outer-coat. The tendency to wave should only be on the shoulders, neck, back and loins. Face and legs should be very short and straight. Moderate feathering is allowed on the tail and the hindquarters. At this point I feel like a broken record, but the breed standard was written to prioritize those qualities which make the Chesapeake Bay Retriever first and foremost a hunting dog. The coat type is what allows our dogs to stay warm and dry in icy conditions. I have seen a dog in February literally with ice crystals clinging to the harsh outer coat while the dog herself was totally oblivious to that fact since she was warm and dry and 100% ready to keep bringing in the birds. When a Chesapeake comes out of the water and shakes off, the coat should remain merely moist. I once had a hunt test judge remark with amazement at how dry my dog’s coat was after completing his water retrieve. I, myself, was wet up to my waist after he shook himself off, but the dog was relatively dry. The short coat is also a huge benefit in that it does not collect dirt, burrs and other field debris. My show dog friends with other breeds that also run hunt tests often spend quite a bit of time grooming their dogs after an event to keep the coats nice. I merely hose my dog off or throw a bumper in clean water, let the dog do a happy retrieve and we are good to go. >



A well-bred Chesapeake these days is more likely to enjoy the company of a variety of people—not just members of their family.



Some judges and breeders absolutely will show a color preference towards brown. Many refer to CBRs as “the brown dog.” Again, I want to reiterate that this is a hunting breed, the different colors being developed for particular hunting habitats. A dark brown Chesapeake will figuratively “disappear” along a heavily wooded river bank such as those on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. A deadgrass Chesapeake is the perfect “cammo dog” in a Texas rice field or a Midwestern corn field. Sedge is perfect for clay river banks. Etc, etc, etc. I think you get the picture. There should never be a preference for one color over another. Each acceptable color corresponds to a particular hunting habitat.

Temperament: Should be happy and confident. Aggressive is never acceptable. An insufficiently socialized Chesapeake may appear timid, but this should never progress to aggression. Let’s face it, dog shows are not at all like real life. A puppy or a young dog that is new to the dog show world is often a little unnerved. Being comfortable in such a strange environment takes time. Socialization is key. At home, the Chessie is playful and extremely loyal to his/her family.

I think the breed standard is pretty straight forward in terms of disqualifications. However, I will elaborate on one in particular. I truly believe it is easier for future judges and owners to respect the standard if they understand the “why” for a disqualification. So I will elaborate on one:

Coat: curly or tendency to curl all over the body, feathering on legs or tail that is over 1.75 inches long. Think practical hunting breed—soft, curly coats are not as water repellent as they need to be. Long feathering encourages burrs and debris to collect when hunting. Personally, after hunting I want to relax with my dog—not spend hours grooming the crud out of their coats.

I cannot think of any “secrets.” Most breeders I know are very dedicated and like to fully disclose the down and dirty as well as the exceptional qualities of the breed to potential puppy purchasers. The philosophy is that one cannot make an informed decision unless one has all the information. Besides that, a “delightful” behavior to one person, can be an “unacceptable” trait to another person.

Current trends in breeding: I think the dedicated, conscientious breeders have done a lot towards improving temperaments in the breed in the last 20-30 years. That should definitely be continued. A well-bred Chesapeake these days is more likely to enjoy the company of a variety of people—not just members of their family. However, the instinctive protective nature and intense loyalty is still there. It’s just not carried to extremes.

On a negative note: I do, however, think many of today’s show dogs are losing balance front to rear. I see many more dogs that are over-angulated in the rear compared to the front. This is not

structurally sound. I am also seeing some coats that are very pretty to look at, but are losing the harsh outer-coat that is so essential in our breed’s water repellency. A contributing factor is that many judges now expect a shiny, clean coat and if a shampoo is consistently used, especially one with conditioner, the coat can become “soft” to the feel. Oil in the coat is a quality that should be judged for and not against. Some coats, I fear, really are too soft and curly. We are not supposed to have the shiny look and silky feel of a Golden or the incredible softness of a Curly. Ours is supposed to be a practical breed, requiring very little grooming for the show ring. If I wanted a breed that required constant coat care, I would not have chosen the Chesapeake. I would love to see us go back to the days when one could hunt in the early a.m. and then simply hose the dog off and be competing in the show ring in the afternoon. Every moment I save in not having to groom is more time spent engaging in fun activities with my dog. I believe proper coat is, by far, the most difficult thing for most judges to understand.

Lastly, I hate to say it, but I have noticed that some bloodlines over the years have concentrated solely on producing only show dogs to the exclusion of field ability and vice versa. I am not saying this is intentional, just a sad by-product of putting too much emphasis on one aspect of the breed. I would be heartsick if our breed broke off into two branches—the show dogs and the field dogs. Luckily, most Chesaapeakes can still do what they were bred to do. I just hope we as a whole keep it that way. We already have many dedicated breeders that are determined to produce show dogs that can be used as hunting dogs. Judges can tremendously help breeders by consistently putting up structurally sound dogs with proper coat and not get hung up on a single aspect of the breed standard.

Something else to share: The breed standard describes a well-balanced, powerfully built, structurally sound dog that moves freely and effortlessly. This is very important. Not just for pretty movement in the show ring, but for the soundness necessary to allow the dog to hunt well into old age and to decrease the incidence of injuries. We’ve personally bred and owned a dog that earned her fourth and last Master National plate as an 11-year-old—structural soundness really and truly matters. That brings me to my last point. Too many Chesaapeakes are shown too fat. It’s as if the judges mistake an overweight dog for one with substance. A CBR should look like a Sporting dog, ready for the field at the drop of a hat and one that could be hunted hard all day. Our breed excels not only as working retrievers, but also as upland dogs. Think of how lean breeds—specifically developed as upland dogs—are in the Sporting Group. We should have fit dogs. Yes, they should be powerfully-built for retrieving under very harsh conditions, but also built for doing it every day during hunting season. Moderation is so very important! ■