

Feathering On The Chesapeake Bay Retriever

The American Chesapeake Club is writing to provide clarification to our standard, as there have been numerous concerns expressed to our Judges Education committee in recent years pertaining to the application of the breed standard disqualification: Feathering on the Tail and Legs.

The standard reads "Feathering on the tail or legs over 1 3/4 inches long must be disqualified" The standard does allow the hair on the tail and legs to be longer than the body coat- "*Coat should be thick and short, nowhere over 1 1/2 inches long*". There can be an appearance and an allowance of longer coat than on the body most commonly seen on the tail and more rarely on the legs. This longer appearance should not be mistaken for the true feathering like a number of breeds that do have feathering- examples would be the four setters and the following retrievers: Flat-Coated, Golden & Nova Scotia Duck Tollers. They have definite consistent amounts of hair hanging down from their tails like flags, and/or hair out from their legs. As breeder judge Nat Horn explains "*The DQ for tail is required to avoid a setter type feathery appearance. This can be determined by sight.*"

What is sometimes seen on the Chesapeake are sparse wisps of longer hair especially on the tail. The dog with this appearance to its tail is often a dog that is shedding/shed out. In shedding the "fill in" of the tail with undercoat is missing. This makes the outer hair coat appear to be longer. This look, however, is not like the full flags of hair on breeds with true feathering per *Canine Terminology* - Harold R. Spira - "Synonyms: flag, fringe, fringing, plume." It is sparse, wispy and thin. When the dog comes back into coat, the "fill" of undercoat will return and the wispy look of longer hair coat is gone. Some exhibitors will often neat the tail hair when the dog is shedding. Whether in coat or shedding, some stray hairs on a tail is not the type of feathering the disqualification is referencing.

Our exhibitors have reported to the JEC incidents where the judge pulled the tail hair down to check its length. If the tail or leg hair is not hanging down from the tail or out from the leg like those breeds with true feathers, it is not the feathering referenced in the standard. "*Never measure the hair on a tail by lifting the tail and touching the hair on the tail. Trying to measure by pulling the hair, lifting the hair or stretching the hair will only disturb the dog.*" Nat Horn breeder judge. The dog will resist being touched - it will sit down or turn around or not want to be re-stacked.

Per Mr. Timothy Thomas, Vice-President, Conformation – "wickets and scales are the only devices approved by the AKC that may be used by judges in the ring to assess dogs. When standards have disqualifications associated with physical characteristics other than height or weight, the recommended procedure is to compare that measurement to one's hands... For the Chesapeake Bay Retriever, a judge may measure their finger or thumb to know the 1 3/4" mark and then compare it to the feathering on the tail or legs if they question its length."

The premise of this article is to distinguish between "feathering" which is bushy and resembles a flag or a plume vs. sparse, thin hair coat usually seen on an exhibit that is not carrying a full coat. A tail that is "wrapped" with its coat is ideal. Pictures below should help to clarify various types of coat a judge might encounter in judging Chesapeake Bay Retrievers.

A true long coated Chesapeake is CLEARLY long-coated. The body and even the ears will have long hair, there will be fringe on the back of the legs and the tail will have a bushy appearance-not just wisps.

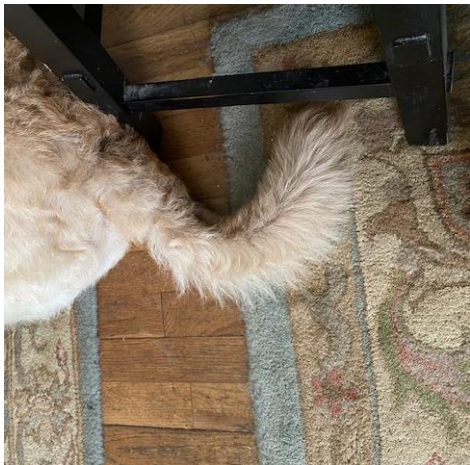
Respectfully submitted and written by Chesapeake Bay Retriever breeder judges:
Dyane Baldwin (Emeritus)
Nathaniel Horn #4549
Betsy Horn Humer #5156

Submitted by: Angie Cox, JEC #114557

Left and Right Below: Tails that should be DQ'd



Below: Tail that should be DQ'd



Below: Both tails are acceptable



Below: Tails that are exceptional
Left: Tail wraps underneath
Right: Heavily coated, no feathering



Below: More examples of correct tails

