



**Flatcoated Retriever Society**

**Information Booklet**

compiled by Barbara Harkin and Shirley Johnson

published 1992 as ISBN 0 9528796 1 1

by

The Flatcoated Retriever Society

Reprinted 1996

Amended and reprinted 2010

Amended and reprinted 2015

Amended and reprinted 2024

incorporates

**The Breed Standard  
From the Kennel Club, January 2009**

ISBN 978 09528796 2 6

© Copyright 2010

The Flatcoated Retriever Society

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced,  
stored in a retrieval system,  
or transmitted in any form by any means,  
electronic, mechanical, photocopying,  
recording or otherwise,  
without the prior permission  
of the Flatcoated Retriever Society.

[www.flatcoated-retriever-society.org](http://www.flatcoated-retriever-society.org)

## **DEDICATION**

*This booklet is dedicated to Mrs Kathleen Mary Sheldon whose kindness in leaving a legacy to the Flatcoated Retriever Society in 1992 enabled the booklet to be printed. Mrs Sheldon was obviously a great animal lover and although she did not own a Flatcoat she took an interest in the Breed after a friend took his dog to visit her. She read our publications and was impressed by the care and concern shown by the Society for the Breed's health and welfare.*

### **CONTENTS:**

- 1) CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BREED**
- 2) HISTORY OF THE BREED**
- 3) THE FLATCOATED RETRIEVER SOCIETY**
- 4) INFORMATION ON ACTIVITIES**
- 5) CODE OF ETHICS**
- 6) INFORMATION FOR NEW PUPPY OWNERS**
- 7) CLARIFICATION OF THE BREED STANDARD**
- 8) CONCLUSION**

**DATES OF EVENTS ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE SOCIETY'S WEBSITE.**

**<https://www.flatcoated-retriever-society.org/>**

## **1) CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BREED**

Flatcoated Retrievers were bred originally to retrieve dead and wounded game and had to mix with many dogs on a shooting day. Therefore, a kind, biddable temperament and a soft, gentle mouth was of prime importance. However, they also had to be willing to enter thick cover, such as brambles and nettles and so needed the courage and stamina to work hard on long shooting days.

Their main characteristics are lively, sometimes boisterous especially with small children. Flatcoats are very "licky", they love to give and receive affection and attention. They need to be given your time and can be destructive and/or noisy if left for long periods, especially when young. Flatcoats have an enquiring mind and can be very independent if not disciplined at an early age. They love water from the smallest muddy puddle to a stream or the sea and they can smell it a long way off! However, if properly educated/trained Flatcoats can be at home in any capacity, be it as a working gundog, a show dog, obedience or agility dogs and in other spheres such as hearing dogs for the deaf and PAT dogs, who visit hospitals and old peoples homes. Flatcoats can always be delightful companions for they are happy dogs with ever wagging tails, who never seem to grow old. They are constantly picking things up, from slippers, to cushions, tea towels, underwear, sticks and stones. Be careful Flatcoats can swallow tea towels, socks and underwear whole which can cause internal blockages. Please allow them to carry something which is not dangerous as they need to do this, but articles should always be removed gently from them. Always encourage Flatcoats to come to you when they have something in their mouths and praise them when they release it to you. Never chase after them as you may find this turns into an amusing game for your dog. However, do not forget they were bred to retrieve and this inbred instinct should not be discouraged.

Basic obedience training is recommended for young Flatcoats (especially young males) as training and socialisation when young is very important and forms the basis of a well-mannered and happy adult dog.

## **2) HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BREED**

During the 19th Century, with the improvement of firearms and ammunition and the more widespread adoption of the art of shooting flying birds, sportsmen began to discover the need of a specialist dog to retrieve their bag and especially to find wounded birds, instead of, as hitherto, leaving the work to their Setters, Pointers and Spaniels.

The basic ingredients for this new type of gundog seem to have been the Lesser Newfoundland or Labrador (a great water dog which was imported in some numbers by cod fishermen and sailors), the larger Spaniels and the Setters and Pointers. By crossing and selection, improved retrieving performance was obtained. One variety, then known as the Wavy-coated Retriever, became very popular and with its Curly cousin was widely used both by Gamekeepers and sporting men. These Wavy-coats were the start of the modern Flatcoat. It is likely that Collie blood was introduced around the 1890s to produce the flatter coats which were becoming fashionable. Shooting men then developed the Flatcoat into a breed of such known excellence that it was quite the most popular variety of Retriever from around 1890 up to the First World War.

In the show ring around the turn of the century Flatcoats, Golden Retrievers and Labradors could all be shown in the same class but later Labradors were recognised as a separate breed. By 1911, 146 Labradors were registered along with 400 Flatcoats. In 1911 Golden Retrievers were also recognised as a separate breed by the Kennel Club and by 1926 both Golden Retrievers' and Labradors' Registrations exceeded those of the Flatcoats. Inter-breeding between Retrievers was permitted during these years due to a shortage of blood lines. Since 1911 the Flatcoat has been selectively bred to be black, although livers were bred in the 1930s and accepted as a Breed colour by the Society in the 1940s. Due to the crossing of the different varieties of Retrievers and the mix of colours in other dogs originally used to produce Flatcoats, black or liver Flatcoats can carry recessive (hidden) genes which mean that yellow Flatcoats and black dogs with white markings (probably due to collie ancestry) can still be born today from black or liver parents. These colours are not acceptable and should not be bred from (see articles on yellow Flatcoats). However, a few white hairs on the chest and in between the pads are not uncommon in the breed and are acceptable.

After the First World War the popularity of the Golden and Labrador Retrievers continued to grow and Flatcoats became far smaller numerically. In fact, when the Flatcoated Retriever Society was formed in 1947 there were under 80 Flatcoats registered with the Kennel Club. In 1961 119 were registered and in 1971 293 were registered. However, since the 1980s its popularity has increased and registrations doubled over ten years until in 2004 1,538 Flatcoats were registered with the Kennel Club. Due to the small gene pool available at one time most Flatcoats have common ancestors.

### **3-THE FLATCOATED RETRIEVER SOCIETY**

The first Flatcoated Retriever Breed Club was the Flatcoated Retriever Association, which was founded in 1923 and a Breed Standard was drawn up and accepted by the Kennel Club. This Standard is substantially the same today and was retained when the Flatcoated Retriever Society was formed in 1947.

The Objects of the Society are:-

- a) To promote the breeding of a type of Flatcoat as laid down in the Breed Standard.
- b) To encourage the training and working of the Breed.
- c) To run Shows, Field Trials and Working Tests.

An Annual General Meeting is held every March in the Midlands when Officers and Committee Members are elected, and any important business is discussed and voted on. All Members of the Society are entitled to attend the AGM.

The Officers of the Society are a President, a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, an Honorary Secretary, an Honorary Treasurer, an Honorary Field Trial Secretary, an Honorary Show Secretary, an Honorary Working Test Secretary, Honorary Health Secretary and the Rescue, Rehoming & Welfare Secretary. There are also nine Committee Members (details of some of the Members elected as Officers and Committee Members may be found in the separate insert sheet. Full details appear in the Year Book and on the FCRS Website).

Publications:

The Society publishes a Year Book in the summer and a Newsletter in the autumn and these are sent to all Members of the Society.

Other breed specific books:

Dr Nancy Laughton (Claverdon) Patron of the Society and distinguished owner of Flatcoated Retrievers since 1944, had a book published called "A Review of the Flat-Coated Retriever" which is now very difficult to obtain. A reprint of this book was made in 2006 as a memorial to Dr. Nancy Laughton and is available through the FCRS Shop.

"Flatcoated Retrievers Today" written by Mrs Joan Mason, and published by Ringpress Books Ltd. This book is not available through the Society.

"The World of Dogs Flatcoated Retrievers" written by Mrs Brenda Phillips, and published by Kingdom Books. This book is also not available through the Society.

The Flatcoated Retriever in the Millenium written by Brenda Hutchison and Val Jones, this informative book was published as a limited edition in 2019, unfortunately now not widely available.

### AREA REPRESENTATIVES

Area Representatives have been appointed throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland by the Society. The Area Reps are available to advise or support anyone who has a Flatcoated Retriever and would like to discuss the various disciplines they could enjoy with their dog. Your local Area Rep will help you to find suitable training classes and if they are unable to do this, put you in touch with someone who can help you. All information will be treated confidentially. Owners of puppies or older dogs can of course contact their breeder with any queries, and your breeder can put you in touch with your local Area Rep.

A list of Area Representatives can be found on our Web site listed under Contacts. Any questions can be answered by the Area Representative Coordinator, contact details can be found on the Society website.

All advice is given in good faith and neither the Society nor the Representative can be held legally responsible.

### RESCUE, REHOMING & WELFARE SCHEME

This Scheme was set up in 1988. The Objectives of the Scheme are "to place in loving, caring homes, Flatcoated Retrievers who, due to unfortunate or unforeseen circumstances require rehoming. To assist, where possible and/or appropriate, with welfare matters concerning Flatcoated Retrievers". The Scheme will assist owners or breeders with non-urgent rehoming. Urgent cases may be dealt with by the Scheme, who become responsible for assessing and rehoming these dogs. A list of homes available for older Flatcoats (i.e. from 6 mths) is held by the National Coordinator/Secretary of the Scheme (See insert sheet or the FCRS Website for details). Urgent cases may be dealt with by one of the Scheme's Area Representatives, but please contact the National Coordinator initially.

<https://www.flatcoated-retriever-society.org/flatcoated-retriever-society-rescue-rehoming-welfare-scheme-information/>

### LITTER RECORDER

Details of litters may be obtained from or given to the Litter Recorder (See insert sheet for details or consult the FCRS Website). The Society encourages breeders to observe a Code of Ethics (see Item 6). Please contact the Litter Recorder if you would like to locate a puppy, but beware of some Internet advertisements for Flatcoat puppies, which may be from less caring breeders.

### FOUNDER MEMBERS MEMORIAL FUND

This fund was originally inaugurated in 1995 and called the Colin Wells Memorial Fund. In 2001/2002 this was changed to the Founder Members Memorial Fund in recognition of those who gave so much to The Society in its early years.

The Fund is an educational Fund to provide supplementary grants to those retriever owners associated with the Flatcoated Retriever, who wish to pursue educational studies or activities which will further the interests of the breed. An application form for a grant is available on the FCRS Website. The Fund is administered by the Finance Sub-committee.

### 250 CLUB

The "250 Club" is the fund-raising arm of the Flatcoated Retriever Society, a single fully paid member is allowed two numbers and joint fully paid members, four numbers, each number is valued at £1 per month, Payments of subscriptions should be made annually by Standing Order, Cheque or Cash. This must be paid on January 1<sup>st</sup> each year, the sum of £12.00 p.a (Please see insert sheet or FCRS Website for contact name).

### HEALTH SUB-COMMITTEE

The Health Sub-Committee was formed in 1994 following interest generated by members of the Society. It liases with the General Committee, providing reports on the current health of the breed and researches and monitors ongoing health statistics and incidence of disease.

The Society collates information on a number of conditions which can occur in Flatcoats, if unfortunately, your Flatcoat is diagnosed with a disease or health condition, please consider reporting this to the Health Sub-Committee using the report form available on the Society website Health pages. Information about breed related health research currently being undertaken can be found on the FCRS website.

All information given to members of the Health Committee is strictly confidential and only stored and shared with owner's written permission. Advice is available to all owners of all Flatcoated Retrievers (Please see Insert Sheet or consult the FCRS Website for contacts).

## **4 ACTIVITIES**

### **GUNDOG FIELD TRIALS AND SHOOTING DOG CERTIFICATE**

The Society arranges breed specific Field Trials during the Shooting season and encourages the training and working of the Breed. Field Trials aim to test the working ability of gundogs in competitive conditions and will resemble, as closely as possible, a day's shooting in the field.

More information on Field Trials may be obtained here

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/events-and-activities/field-trials-and-working-gundogs/new-to-field-trials/>

Whilst actively encouraging members to aspire to Field Trialing their dogs the Society is conscious this might not be to all handlers taste so in the early eighties, under the auspices of the late Amelia Jessel, the Shooting Dog Certificate was devised to endeavour to provide a register, for breeding purposes, of dogs which would promote the necessary working attributes of the breed, ie: natural working instinct, biddability, soft mouth and quietness in the Field. Please refer to The Society website <https://www.flatcoated-retriever-society.org> click on 'working' then 'FT subcommittee role' for further details.

The Society runs Kennel Club Show Gundog Working Certificate days from time to time. A Flatcoat which has won a Challenge Certificate, or which has previously qualified for Crufts through a breed class may be entered for the Show Gundog Working Certificate (SGWC). The acquisition of the SGWC indicates that a qualified dog has retained its working ability and carries prestigious recognition in the Kennel Club Stud Book. Success in the KC SGWC also enables a dog that has been awarded the title of Show Champion, to demonstrate it's working ability and to be made up to a Champion. The term Champion (or Full Champion) must not be confused with the term 'Dual Champion'. A Dual Champion is a dog that has become a champion in the show ring and a Field Trial Champion, which in recent years, sadly, has become quite a rare occurrence.

Please note that all dogs and handlers need good experience of shooting practices and of freshly shot game before entering a Field Trial or undertaking a SDC or the KCSGWC. The Field Trial Secretary and Subcommittee will guide you in this regard.

The Society organises some Live Game training days each year which will be advertised via social media and on the Society's Website. If interested, please look out for these in late summer before the start of the shooting season.

Please contact the Field Trial Secretary for further details of any of the above or consult the "working" section of the Flatcoated Retriever Society Website.

### **GUNDOG TRAINING & WORKING TESTS**

Gundog training is an ideal way to strengthen your bond with your Flatcoat and is hopefully something you and your dog will enjoy. Gundog training can be beneficial both for pet dogs and for those who will be worked in the shooting field. Training is aimed at improving control, obedience, hunting and retrieving. Flatcoats respond best to positive training methods and harsh handling, or physical punishment of dogs is not condoned by the Society.

The Society has a graded training scheme, The Working Flatcoated Retriever Development Programme, which you and your dog can work towards. Details are published in the "Working" selection of the Society Website. The Society offers training days, workshops and online seminars that will help you work towards the various grades. These are advertised via the "Working" section of the Society Website and via Social Media.

There are many Gundog Clubs, and indeed many independent Gundog Trainers, around the country that offer training for gundogs. The United Retriever Club, which is divided into areas, will help all retriever breeds with training and tests and encourages newcomers to take part. You can contact the Secretary of the United Retriever Club (see insert sheet or the URC Website) for more information. Your FCRS Area Working Test and Training Organiser may be able to help you locate your nearest Gundog Club that can offer training, tests or field trials or your nearest independent Gundog Trainer who might be able to assist you in training your dog. There is also a list of independent Gundog Trainers known to have experience with the Breed in the "Working" section of the Society Website here <https://www.flatcoated-retriever-society.org/gundog-working-test-training-contacts/> . Any of these different clubs or trainers will be able to help you attain the grades of the Working Flatcoated Retriever Development Programme.

Gundog Working Tests are a good way to see how your training is progressing. In a Working Test dogs and handlers compete over 4 or 5 tests, set on a variety of different ground - grassland, woodland and, hopefully, water. Blank pistol shot is used, and the dogs retrieve canvas dummies on exercises which simulate shooting scenarios. Dogs are expected to be steady to shot and will be asked to retrieve a mixture of seen and unseen dummies. They are expected to respond to their handler's whistle, hand signals and commands to stop, move or hunt. Flatcoats may enter breed specific Working Tests or AV (Any Variety) Retriever Working Tests, in which they will compete alongside other Retriever breeds.

Several breed specific Working Tests are held by the Society each year in different areas of the country. These areas are Central/Bucks, Cotswold, Eastern Counties, Midlands, Southern, South West and Wessex (Dorset), although it should be noted that not all areas run working tests every year. These tests are organised by the FCRS Area Working Test and Training Organisers, whose contact details are listed on the Society website here <https://www.flatcoated-retriever-society.org/gundog-working-test-training-contacts/> Working tests may be entered at different levels or classes - usually Puppy, Special Puppy, Novice Dog/Novice Handler, Novice or Open. Further details on these terms and details of how to enter a working test may be found in the "Working" section of the Society Website here <https://www.flatcoated-retriever-society.org/working-forms/>

Our most prestigious working tests each year are known as the Shirley Radburn National Working Tests, named after a benefactor of the Society. These are organised by the Working Test Secretary and as with all our Working Tests, the Schedule, entry forms and details of how to enter are published in the "Working" selection of the Society Website and are advertised via Social Media and on the website.

There is a friendly rivalry between the different Working Test and Training Areas of the Society that is played out in our annual Inter-Area Team Competition, in which teams of members and their Flatcoats compete together in a working test. If you would be interested in competing in a team event, please contact your Area Working Test and Training Organiser.

The best way to find out what goes on at a Gundog Working Test if you have not experienced one is to come along to a test and find out. The Area Working Test and Training Organisers and the Society's Working Test Secretary would be delighted to facilitate this for you and are always pleased to hear from individuals willing to help out at Working Tests, which is a fun way to find out more about them.

For further information on all Gundog activities please contact the Working Test Secretary, Field Trial Secretary or consult the website. (Up to date contact details for the Working Test Secretary and the Field Trial Secretary are available via the website). The best Social Media sites for information of the working side of the breed are the FCRS Facebook page (public) <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064780386569> and the independently administrated, private Facebook group, Flatcoats Tests Trials and Training <https://www.facebook.com/share/dfnzDMhimkPfanKw/?mibextid=K35Xfp>

### SHOWS AND SHOW TRAINING

Flatcoats are such a versatile breed and entering a show is one of the many events you can choose to participate in. This is where judges assess dogs and bitches with a view to finding those that most fit the breed standard, in the past this was imperative to help to improve the breeding stock within the breed.

We hold a breed Open show and a breed Championship show each year (and as from 2024 until 2027 we will be holding two Championship shows each year) plus the Open show. We are also responsible for ensuring that our upcoming judges have the best access to support and mentoring to enable them to progress their judging careers.

Showing your Fatcoat is highly enjoyable and rewarding and is part of understanding the breed and enables you to acquire the knowledge to breed exhibits conforming to the breed standard and retaining our Flatcoats' true qualities. It is a highly sociable hobby and at Championship Show level is where you will see the most flatcoats and owners together; so please come along to either watch, learn or participate, it is always a pleasure to welcome new flatcoat owners.

Some Local Dog Clubs hold "ringcraft" classes to prepare owners and their dogs for showing. The Kennel Club has information on clubs which hold Ringcraft classes, but your Area Contact may also be able to help you find the nearest club locally that can offer show training and or someone who can assist you with that first trimming and preparation session before going to your first show.

For further information on all Show activities (including Judging) please contact the Show Secretary or consult the FCRS Website and or the Flatcoated Retriever Society Facebook Page.

### OBEDIENCE TRAINING

Most areas have a local dog training club which will hold basic obedience courses. The Kennel Club website has information on Dog training and how to find a club <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/search/find-a-club/> but your Area representative may also be able to help you find a Club locally that can offer obedience training (see separate insert sheet or consult the FCRS Website for contacts).

### AGILITY

Flatcoats love agility and if you are lucky enough to find a training club near you, do have a go, further information about agility can be found on the Kennel Club website <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/events-and-activities/agility/>

### JUNIORS

The Society is keen to encourage young persons' interest in the breed, there are many different activities that Juniors can take part in including showing and junior handling, obedience, agility, flyball, gundog working tests and heelwork to music. Please contact the Junior Members' Coordinator for more information.

## **5 CODE OF ETHICS**

*The Code of Ethics is devised in accordance with the aims and Objectives of The Flatcoated Retriever Society. All Society members undertake to abide by its General Code of Ethics as laid down below.*

### **Members**

- 1 Will properly house, feed, water and exercise all dogs under their care and arrange for appropriate Veterinary attention if and when required.
- 2 Will agree without reservation, that any Veterinary surgeon performing an operation on any of their dogs which alters the natural conformation of the animal may report such an operation to the Kennel Club.
- 3 Will agree that no healthy puppy will be culled. Puppies which may not conform to the Breed Standard should be placed in suitable homes.
- 4 Will abide by all aspects of the Animal Welfare Act.
- 5 Will not create demand for, nor supply, puppies that have been docked illegally.
- 6 Will agree not to breed from a dog or bitch which could be in any way harmful to the dog or to the breed.
- 7 Will not allow any of their dogs to roam at large or to cause a nuisance to neighbours or those carrying out official duties.
- 8 Will ensure that their dogs wear properly tagged collars and will be kept leashed or under effective control when away from home.
- 9 Will clean up after their dogs in public places or anywhere their dogs are being exhibited.
- 10 Will only sell dogs where there is a reasonable expectation of a happy and healthy life and will help with the re-homing of a dog if the initial circumstances change.
- 11 Will supply written details of all dietary requirements and give guidance concerning responsible ownership when placing dogs in a new home.
- 12 Will ensure that all relevant Kennel Club documents are provided to the new owner when selling or transferring a dog and will agree, in writing, to forward any relevant documents at the earliest opportunity, if not immediately available.
- 13 Will not sell any dog to commercial dog wholesalers, retail pet dealers or directly or indirectly allow dogs to be given as a prize or donation in a competition of any kind. Will not sell by sale or auction Kennel Club registration certificates as stand-alone items (not accompanying a dog).
- 14 Will not knowingly misrepresent the characteristics of the breed nor falsely advertise dogs

nor mislead any person regarding the health or quality of the dog.

- 15 Shall at all times maintain a high standard of health and care for their Flatcoated Retrievers.
- 16 Will, as a Breeder, only breed from those Flatcoated Retrievers believed to be clear from any known serious hereditary defects and which are not suffering from any acute problem. To this effect, all breeding stock, including imported dogs, should be X-rayed for Hip Dysplasia and examined for Hereditary Cataract, Progressive Retinal Atrophy and Glaucoma under the BVA/KC Scheme. **At all times, the improvement of breeding stock must be the primary consideration.** Stud dog owners must satisfy themselves as to the suitability of the bitch's breeding and the conditions under which the litter/s would be reared. A stud dog owner must be satisfied that the bitch has had the necessary health checks as should the dog. Extensive use of any particular stud dog is actively discouraged.

Bitches should not be bred from until at least two and a half years old. Normally no bitch should be expected to produce more than three litters. There should be at least a year between each litter bred from a bitch. The Kennel Club will only register litters born to bitches over eight years old if there are exceptional circumstances.

Members should not mate siblings, half siblings, mother to son or father to daughter.

- 17 Dogs that are picking up, beating or training on private ground are exempt from wearing collars.
- 18 Puppies should not change hands before the age of eight weeks. All puppies sold over 12 weeks of age should, if possible, be fully vaccinated. If bitch puppies are sold on breeding terms, a "Breeding Term Contract" should be endorsed by the Kennel Club.
- 19 The breeder of puppies shall, at the time of sale, provide a satisfactory diet sheet, complete health record, details of worming carried out and a copy of the pedigree with parents' hip scores and eye certificates available for inspection. Advice regarding vaccination against infectious diseases should also be given. Kennel Club endorsements on puppies should be explained in detail to potential new owners.
- 20 Dogs requiring rehoming are subject to the Flatcoated Retriever Society Rescue, Rehoming and Welfare Scheme rules which state that registration papers are not passed to the new owners.
- 21 Members should not knowingly sell to laboratories. When exporting overseas, all sellers of puppies should ensure the suitability of the owners and the environment for a Flatcoat. The ethics of the country with regard to dogs should also be taken into account.
- 22 Breeders/owners shall at all times be extremely careful when advertising or selling Flatcoated Retrievers.
- 23 Members should give very serious consideration before proposing or seconding new Members for entry into the Society.

Breach of these provisions may result in expulsion from club membership and/or disciplinary action by the Kennel Club and/or reporting to the relevant authorities for legal action, as appropriate.

## **6 INFORMATION FOR NEW PUPPY OWNERS**

Before obtaining a puppy ensure that you have sufficient space and time to rear it satisfactorily. Make sure the puppy will have a place with a bed to call its own, this is very important as puppies need much sleep in order to grow well. Also be prepared that puppies up to a year old (or older) may chew anything and everything. As already mentioned at the beginning of this booklet Flatcoats will constantly want to pick up and carry things but be careful because Flatcoats of any age can swallow items such as tea towels, socks and underwear whole which can cause internal blockages. Please allow them to carry something which is not dangerous as they need to do this, but articles should always be removed gently from them and always praise them when they release it to you. Never chase after them as you may find this turns into an amusing game for your dog, however, do not forget Flatcoats were bred to retrieve and this inbred instinct should not be discouraged.

It must again be stressed that basic obedience training is recommended for young Flatcoats (especially young males) as training and socialisation when young is very important and forms the basis of a well-mannered and happy adult dog.

### **Registration**

When the puppy is collected you should be given a signed copy of the pedigree and the Registration Certificate from the Kennel Club. Sometimes this Certificate is not ready at this time but you should receive a signed acknowledgement that the breeder has applied for it.

### **Veterinary Advice**

It is advisable to take your new puppy to be checked over by your vet and also to obtain advice regarding vaccinations against infectious diseases. Depending on the vaccine brand used by your vet, the age they recommend for vaccination doses may differ. Inform your vet as to how the puppy has been wormed by the breeder, obtain further worming preparations as necessary and remember your Flatcoat has to be wormed regularly throughout its life.

### **Other Specialist Advice**

Male puppies should have two testicles but these can descend at any time up to several months old. When young the top jaw of the pup can be slightly over the bottom jaw (called an overshot bite) in some dogs, this usually corrects itself as the puppy matures and the head grows. Young Flatcoats can develop eye conditions which may only be diagnosed correctly by a canine eye specialist, if a vet recommends an eye operation on a young Flatcoat please consider whether a second expert opinion is necessary. If you are ever worried about anything please consult the breeder of the puppy, any experienced Flatcoat breeder or a member of the Society Health Sub-Committee.

### **Insurance**

It is strongly advised that you continue to insure your Flatcoat puppy against illness, accident and death. Hopefully the breeder will have arranged initial cover for the puppy but your Vet will have details of insurance available for dogs.

### **Feeding**

Before collecting the puppy find out what it is being fed on and arrange to obtain a supply of this food either from the breeder or a retailer. Any changes in diet should be done gradually, preferably over a week to avoid upsetting the digestion. It is recommended not to have

vaccinations, worming or make diet changes at the same time as these can upset the pup's digestion. The puppy should be fed little and often when very small; at least four meals a day until about four months old but remember to increase the amount given as the puppy gets bigger. Some puppies, when they first leave the competition of their littermates, may not eat very well to begin with but sensible feeding, patience and common sense can soon overcome this phase. Remember that a hungry, healthy puppy should eat but if you are worried consult the breeder of the puppy or your vet.

At about four months, when a meal is cut out, the amount given for the remaining three meals should be increased and by six months meals can be cut down to two meals a day, one morning and night. It is recommended that young Flatcoats receive two meals until at least twelve months old and in fact many owners continue always to give two meals a day to their dogs, this may avoid a gastric torsion/bloat. (Torsion/Bloat is a condition when a Flatcoat's stomach very obviously distends and is a veterinary emergency -see the Society website health information pages for further detail).

Feeding is a very personal thing but a suitable, well balanced diet of good quality food should be fed to developing puppies to try and ensure correct growth and development.

### **Exercise and Training**

Very young puppies will play for a short period and then sleep. It is important that puppies are allowed to sleep and are not disturbed by children. As soon as the puppy wakes up, take or encourage them into the garden so they can go to the toilet and at the same time use a word or words to encourage it to go such as 'be quick' or 'busy'. Puppies learn to go outside to the toilet eventually but again patience and perseverance will achieve quicker results. It is not enough to leave the puppy on their own in the garden; they must be taught what is wanted and this means you being with them in all weathers. Remember that very young puppies cannot stay dry overnight as they do not have the capacity to wait for so long.

Puppies should get used to wearing a collar. Early lead training can be undertaken when quite young but initially should be for short periods only. Some puppies really struggle on the lead and perhaps letting them run around with it trailing may help them get used to it. Obviously you have to supervise this to ensure it does not get caught up in anything. If you plan to show your puppy, local Ringcraft classes are beneficial. Information on these in your area can be found on the Kennel Club Website.

When vaccinations are complete and the puppy can have very short walks, take them somewhere safe, but preferably with bushes, trees or long grass. Put the puppy down and call them to follow you; if they go off another way hide (but obviously keep an eye on them) and then when they come looking for you give them lots of praise and a treat, making it a positive experience. Training Flatcoats to come to a whistle is also very helpful and again can make things easier as they grow older. Up until at least a year of age Flatcoat pups should not be over exercised with long walks as their bodies (particularly the limb joints) are not developed fully. When exercising your puppy please remember that you should take a bag to clean up after your dog as it is an offence to allow your dog to foul public areas so be a responsible, caring dog owner and avoid criticism or even prosecution.

### **Neutering**

The Flatcoat should be mature in body and character before neutering is considered (not before at least a year of age, preferably older), take time to discuss the pros and cons of neutering with

your dog's breeder, vet or a member of the Health Sub-committee before making an informed decision about whether this is the correct thing for your Flatcoat.

### **Breeding a litter**

The Society would not recommend breeding without careful research first, speak to your dog's breeder for guidance regarding your plans. Carefully read the Code of Ethics to ensure you can follow these guidelines and the Kennel Club website is a useful resource of information for the first time breeder:

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/dog-breeding/first-time-breeders/>

No dog or bitch should be bred from that has a hereditary problem or a suspect temperament. All dogs and bitches used for breeding should have their hips and eyes assessed via an official screening programme and only bred from if results are within acceptable guidelines. In the UK canine health schemes are provided by the British Veterinary Association (BVA) in conjunction with the Kennel Club. Further information is available on the FCRS and BVA websites.

### **Rehoming**

If your circumstances change and you cannot keep your Flatcoat please contact either the breeder or the Rescue, Rehoming & Welfare Scheme as one of these should be able to help you find a good home for your dog. Contact details are on the FCRS Website.

## **7) CLARIFICATION OF THE BREED STANDARD**

### **BREED STANDARD**

From the Kennel Club – January 2009

A Breed Standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament and appearance of a breed and ensures that the breed is fit for function. Absolute soundness is essential. Breeders and Judges should at all times be careful to avoid obvious conditions or exaggerations which would be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed. From time to time, certain conditions or exaggerations may be considered to have the potential to affect dogs in some breeds adversely, and judges and breeders are requested to refer to the Kennel Club website for details of any such current issues. If a feature or quality is desirable, it should only be present in the right measure.

### **Retriever - Flatcoated**

#### General Appearance

A bright active dog of medium size with an intelligent expression, showing power without lumber and raciness without weediness.

#### Characteristics

Generously endowed with natural gundog ability, optimism and friendliness, demonstrated by enthusiastic tail action.

#### Temperament

Confident and kindly.

#### Head & Skull

Head long and nicely moulded. This moulding is characteristic of the breed. Skull flat and moderately broad with a slight stop between the eyes, in no way accentuated, avoiding a down or dish-faced appearance. Nose of good size, with open nostrils. Jaws long and strong, capable of carrying a hare or pheasant.

#### Eyes

Medium size, dark brown or hazel with a very intelligent expression. (A round prominent eye is highly undesirable) not obliquely placed.

#### Ears

Small and well set on, close to the side of the head.

#### Mouth

Jaws strong with perfect regular and complete scissor bite (i.e. upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaws). Teeth sound and strong.

#### Neck

Head well set in the neck, the latter reasonably long and free from throatiness, symmetrically set and obliquely placed in the shoulders, running well into the back to allow for easy seeking of the trail.

### Forequarters

Chest deep and fairly broad, with well-defined brisket, on which elbows should work cleanly and evenly. Forelegs straight, with bone of good quality throughout.

### Body

Foreribs fairly flat. Body well ribbed up, showing a gradual spring and well arched in the centre, but rather lighter towards the quarters Loin short and square. Open couplings are highly undesirable.

### Hindquarters

Muscular. Moderate bend of stifle and hock, the latter well let down. Should stand true all round, cow hocks are highly undesirable.

### Feet

Round and strong with toes close and well-arched. Soles thick and strong.

### Tail

Short, straight and well set on, gaily carried, but never much above the level of the back.

### Gait/Movement

Free and flowing, straight and true as seen from front and rear.

### Coat

Dense, of fine to medium texture and of good quality; as flat as possible. Legs and tail well feathered. Full furnishings on maturity complete the elegance of a good dog.

### Colour

Black or liver only

### Size

Preferred height:       Dogs 59 cm to 61.5 cm (23in to 24 ins)  
                                  Bitches 56.5 cm to 59 cm (22 to 23ins)

Preferred weight in  
hard condition:       Dogs 27kg to 36kg (60lb to 80 lb)  
                                  Bitches 25kg to 32kg (55lb to 70 lb)

### Faults

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault, and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree.

### Note

Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles, fully descended into the scrotum.

### **Non breed standard colours**

In the early 1900s Labradors and Golden Retrievers were emerging as breeds in their own right, but as bloodlines were short, interbreeding was often carried out and at this time the same dogs could be found in Flatcoat, Labrador and Golden Pedigrees. After the Second World War, Flatcoats had become scarce and again some interbreeding was carried out in order to preserve the breed.

During the years after the war there were also dogs who had no Kennel Club Registration Certificates and '2nd Class Registrations' were allowed. This entailed taking a dog to an authority on the supposed Breed and if this expert decided it was a typical specimen, a form was signed. This then entitled the dog to be put on the 'B' Register and its progeny were eligible for Kennel Club Registration.

Due to the foregoing circumstances the retriever breeds have at times had close and interwoven blood relationships, but this does not detract from the fact that in 1923 the original Breed Standard was drawn up which stated that the Flatcoated Retriever was black (liver was accepted in the 1940s). When most of the cross breeding was taking place genetics, and the mode of inheritance, was not widely known or even considered.

Black is a dominant inherited colour and unless both parents carry yellow genes, one genetically pure black parent will ensure that only black puppies are produced. Therefore, if a Golden Retriever or a yellow Labrador or Flatcoat is crossed with a pure black Flatcoat, only black puppies will result. However, these puppies will carry yellow recessive (hidden) genes and these genes can remain hidden for many generations until two dogs, who both carry this gene, are mated, and then some yellow puppies can be born.

There are three considerations for breeders of yellow Flatcoat puppies:

- 1) Do not register these puppies but ensure they go to owners who appreciate that they are not registered and should never be bred from.
- 2) Register the puppies with the Kennel Club as Non Breed Standard (yellow), but also use the endorsement (b) which states 'Progeny not eligible for Registration'.
- 3) Yellow Flatcoats are a non-standard colour so are unable to be shown under KC rules

If yellow progeny are registered with the Kennel Club a record of their breeding is therefore available and they will be listed as 'NBS (yellow)', but if you do not register these puppies, the Society would be grateful for information regarding them.

It is important that, if possible, owners should be aware if their dog or bitch could carry the yellow gene. Obviously if your Flatcoat has produced yellow progeny you should inform any person who would have a direct interest. If you have had yellow puppies in a litter, the owners of the black puppies in the same litter should be informed that their puppy could also carry the yellow gene. Furthermore, if a dog has sired yellow puppies, any bitch owner wishing to use him at stud should be informed and the pedigrees of both animals should be carefully examined to ensure there is no likelihood of both lines carrying this hidden gene.

In summary, the yellow gene exists in some Flatcoats and therefore yellow puppies will occasionally be produced. However, before breeding, if it is known that your dog or bitch could or does carry yellow genes, every effort should be made to reduce the possibility of producing them i.e. do not use similar yellow producing lines. Guidance can always be sought from experienced knowledgeable breeders, or consult your Veterinary surgeon, as Flatcoats can now be tested to determine whether they carry the yellow gene. If registered, it is recommended that their Registration Certificates are endorsed 'Progeny not eligible for Registration', and also registered as NBS (yellow) by the Kennel Club. Finally, it is considered unethical to breed from a yellow Flatcoat and would not be in the best interests of the Breed.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

This booklet has been produced in order to give general information about the breed to new or potential owners, if, after reading the booklet you would like further information please contact the relevant person via the website contacts page. All information within this booklet is given in good faith.

THE OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE OF THE FLATCOATED RETRIEVER SOCIETY WISH YOU MANY HOURS OF PLEASURE WITH YOUR FLATCOAT. THEY ARE SUCH WONDERFUL COMPANIONS AND THEIR SENSE OF HUMOUR, INTELLIGENCE, KINDNESS AND HAPPY DISPOSITION WILL ENRICH THE LIVES OF THEIR OWNERS.

[www.Flatcoated-Retriever-Society.org](http://www.Flatcoated-Retriever-Society.org)