

THE CHESAPEAKE BAY RETRIEVER

The unique qualities of this American retriever were bred and developed for specific needs of early American market hunters and sportsman on the East Coast of the U.S. The market hunters shot 200-300 birds a day on the rugged freezing coast of the Chesapeake Bay, and the surrounding marshes. These waterfowl were loaded into wagons and sold in the small settlements. The Chesapeake Bay Retrievers, often referred to as "Bay Dogs", were expected to have the determination and perseverance to retrieve enormous numbers of birds from icy rough waters, under severe weather conditions, and to guard the wagons and possessions of the hunters. Food and housing for dogs were scarce and only the toughest specimens survived.

The Chesapeake's origin started with two Newfoundlands, a brown dog & a black bitch. They were smaller and shorter coated than the modern Newfoundland. This breed was used to hunt waterfowl and to retrieve flotsam and jetsam from the shipwrecks that occurred on the rugged coast of Newfoundland. The brown dog and black bitch were selected as breeding specimens and were being exported to England from Newfoundland, but the boat carrying them to England wrecked off the Maryland Coast in 1807. The dogs were rescued and purchased by Mr. George Law. They went to different owners who interbred them to the few hunting dogs that were available, probably tan & yellow hounds, Otter hounds, and water spaniels.

The Chesapeake's unique retriever qualities, are his coat, hare shaped feet, high hindquarters, and his prideful loyalty and protectiveness towards his owner and his possessions. He is the toughest, tallest, heaviest, and hardiest of the retrievers and will work hard and long under almost any conditions. While he is sensitive and gentle with his family, he can also be very protective of them as well as his territory.

His conformation demonstrates a true relationship to the performance expected of him. His short, harsh, oily, wavy, coat is unique in the dog world and enables the Chesapeake to work in almost any cover without picking up brambles, burrs, or other debris. It retains very little water and does not easily ice up. His heavy undercoat enables him to work under harsh weather conditions. His hare shaped feet enable him to dig in and climb steep, muddy banks. His high, well muscled hindquarters provide the strength to work in thick, deep marsh mud and the tremendous power needed to swim against strong winter winds and water currents. His small ears are placed high on his head to help prevent water from entering his ear canals. His tail is strong and slightly curved with moderate feathering in order for him to negotiate water turns easily. His chest is deep and wide and his ribs are well sprung to provide the great air capacity needed for endurance. His strong bone and balanced conformation further contribute to his working ability.

Although used throughout the world for hunting waterfowl under rough conditions, the Chesapeake is very versatile. He loves to work and is at his best when working for his master or the family. He is an excellent guard and a quiet calm house pet. He will kennel well as long as he has plenty of human companionship. Chesapeakes have been successfully trained and used to do search and rescue work, as guide dogs for the blind, for tracking humans and animals, and for competing in obedience and agility trials. In Europe Chesapeakes are used for pulling carts and sleds for the handicapped, tracking elk, hunting rabbits, upland game, and waterfowl. In Canada and Alaska they are especially prized for hunting large geese, ducks, as sled dogs and for hunting Kodiak bear.

The 1500 member American Chesapeake Club is devoted to maintaining the original purpose and conformation of the breed. An ideal Chesapeake Bay Retriever should be able to hunt, show in breed or obedience rings, run Gundog tests, field trials, and be a loyal and gentle family pet. The Club tries hard not to have the breed separated into two distinct types: show retrievers and field retrievers, as seen in some of the other retriever breeds. The Club publishes the monthly American Chesapeake Club Bulletin containing timely results of Chesapeake activities throughout the world, notice of upcoming events, current reports from its Board of Directors, and includes informative and educational information about the breed. The Club financially supports and promotes Field Trial and Breed Specialties, an All-Breed Field Trial, the three levels of Working Dog Stakes, AKC Licensed Hunting Tests, Obedience and Tracking Trials, Eye Clinics, Breed Seminars, the Chesapeake entry at a dozen nationwide "ACC Supported Dog Shows," and other educational programs through its U.S. and European Regional Director Program. The 70 Regional Directors are encouraged to

sponsor any of these events, or have training days for activities in which Chesapeakes may be run or shown. The Club recommends that all breeding stock be x-rayed for Hip Dysplasia and examined for hereditary eye defects. They strongly advise against breeding affected dogs. The Club financially supports research institutions devoted to these and other canine problems. The Club also has available for its members the AKC Breed Video, educational training and hunting Videos, a Breeders' List, current Stud Dog and Puppy lists, a brochure on the Breed, and a recommended list of Breed Judges. The Club's Historian provides in depth pedigree information. The members of the ACC Board of Directors are chosen to represent different expertise, interest, and opinion from different geographical areas of the U.S. At present, the American Chesapeake Club is working to develop and support a European Working Certificate that can be earned by Chesapeakes in countries that have difficulty in filling certain requirements described in the ACC Working Certificate Stakes. The first Scandinavian Working Dog Stakes, with special modifications, were held in Norway in 1987 through the efforts of Norwegian ACC Regional Director Britt Overeng and then ACC President Leslie Lowenthal.

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