

The Rare Flat-Coat Retriever

Although not well-known, the Flat-Coated Retriever has some advantages over more common breeds.

By Allan Reznik

Q. We have a black, Flat-Coated Retriever who we adopted from a rescue center. We love her dearly and call her Rosie. I noticed in scanning through the pages of your magazines that I rarely see that breed mentioned. Is she such a rare breed or just not as popular a breed as most others?

A. The Flat-Coated Retriever is not well-known, with a ranking of 100 on the list of all American Kennel Club-recognized breeds. Yet it certainly deserves to have a higher profile.

The Flat Coat is a versatile breed, and most conformation champions also have obedience, field, and agility degrees behind their names. This is a credit to the breeders who value a multi-functional breed and have not allowed the Flat Coat to become exaggerated in appearance. In many of the more popular Sporting breeds, there very definitely exists a split between a field type and a show type, with two very divergent looks. Thankfully, this has not happened in the Flat Coat. Breeders are committed to a dog who can do it all, leaving the duck pond and, with a bit of tidying up, performing equally successfully in the show ring.

Among the retriever breeds, the glamorous Golden and the super popular Lab have eclipsed the lesser-known Chesapeake, Curly Coat, Nova Scotia Duck Toller, and the Flat Coat. However, this is not altogether a bad thing.

Although someone wishing to purchase a puppy may have to put his or her name on a waiting list, many of the genetic issues that have afflicted the more popular Sporting breeds have bypassed the less-common breeds. With fewer breeders on the scene, it's a smaller community. Breeders tend to health test vigilantly and are rather relieved that their chosen breed hasn't suffered from a sudden burst in popularity. This often entices less reputable breeders to jump on the bandwagon and crank out litters to feed public demand.