

The Hunting Style of the Flat-Coated Retriever

THE Flat-Coated Retriever (FCR) was bred in the 19th century to be the gamekeeper's companion. A FCR will exhibit a balance of drive and biddability which, combined with its native enthusiasm for field, presents a pleasing, efficient, and companionable hunting partner. The FCR was developed as a versatile hunting dog. The breed's exceptional bird sense and intelligence allow it to hunt in various styles for the pleasure and preference of its gun. The AKC Spaniel Hunt Tests are an acceptable testing forum for those FCRs that are worked as flushing dogs.

The Flat-Coat is a delight to shoot over. It has the expressive body language of an excited spaniel, yet its larger size makes it easy to see in heavy cover.

The well-trained FCR will most typically work a field within gun range, seeking both air and ground scent. Once on scent, the dog should demonstrate both fine nose and a workmanlike persistence to the bird. The dog should not shirk dense cover if on hot scent. A tight sitting bird in heavy cover may cause the dog to hesitate or flash point prior to the flush; this is not to be considered undesirable. Many Flat-Coats naturally flush in a bold and quick manner, not unlike the livelier spaniels. For the purposes of passing a flushing test, a range of styles from hesitation to bold flush is to be expected.

The FCR is a retriever and as such is very anxious to perform that part of the job. They are excellent markers, and upon release they should mark well, pick up the bird with haste and deliver it with style, pride, and pleasure. The dog's mouth should be firm yet gentle on game. Tracking and retrieving of wounded birds is an important part of their work and this task should be relished as it is executed with sense and purpose.

The breed loves a water retrieve and is likely to have an impressive water entry. Willingness to enter water is a must, though the entry may vary from deliberate to bold.

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