

# Official Standard For The Chesapeake Bay Retriever

**GENERAL APPEARANCE-** Equally proficient on land and in the water, the Chesapeake Bay Retriever was developed along the Chesapeake Bay to hunt waterfowl under the most adverse weather and water conditions, often having to break ice during the course of many strenuous multiple retrieves. Frequently the Chesapeake must face wind, tide and long cold swims in its work. The breed's characteristics are specifically suited to enable the Chesapeake to function with ease, efficiency and endurance. In head, the Chesapeake's skull is broad and round with a medium stop. The jaws should be of sufficient length and strength to carry large game birds with an easy, tender hold. The double coat consists of a short, harsh, wavy outer coat and a dense, fine, wooly undercoat containing an abundance of natural oil and is ideally suited for the icy rugged conditions of weather the Chesapeake often works in. In body, the Chesapeake is a strong, well balanced, powerfully built animal of moderate size and medium length in body and leg, deep and wide in chest, the shoulders built with full liberty of movement, and with no tendency to weakness in any feature, particularly the rear. The power though, should not be at the expense of agility and stamina. Size and substance should not be excessive as this is a working retriever of an active nature.

Distinctive features include eyes that are very clear, of yellowish or amber hue, hindquarters as high or a trifle higher than the shoulders, and a double coat which tends to wave on shoulders, neck, back and loins only.

The Chesapeake is valued for its bright and happy disposition, intelligence, quiet good sense, and affectionate protective nature. Extreme shyness or extreme aggressive tendencies are not desirable in the breed as a gun dog or companion.

Disqualifications: Specimens that are lacking in breed characteristics should be disqualified.

**SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE-** Height Males should measure 23 to 26 inches; females should measure 21 to 24 inches. Oversized or undersized animals are to be severely penalized. Proportion Height from the top of the shoulder blades to the ground should be slightly less than the body length from the breastbone to the point of buttocks. Depth of body should extend at least to the elbow. Shoulder to elbow and elbow to ground should be equal. Weight Males should weigh 65 to 80 pounds; females should weigh 55 to 70 pounds.

**HEAD-** Chesapeake Bay Retriever should have an intelligent expression. Eyes are to be medium large, very clear, of yellowish or amber color and wide apart. Ears are to be small, set well up on the head, hanging loosely, and of medium leather. Skull is broad and round with a medium stop. Nose is medium short. Muzzle is approximately the same length as the skull, tapered, pointed but not sharp. Lips are thin, not pendulous. Bite Scissors is preferred, but a level bite is acceptable.

Disqualifications: Either undershot or overshot bites are to be disqualified.

**NECK, TOPLINE, BODY-** Neck should be of medium length with a strong muscular appearance, tapering to the shoulders. Topline should show the hindquarters to be as high as or a trifle higher than the shoulders. Back should be short, well coupled and powerful. Chest should be strong, deep and wide. Rib cage barrel round and deep. Body is of medium length, neither cobby nor roached, but rather approaching hollowness from underneath as the flanks should be well tucked up. Tail of medium length; medium heavy at base. The tail should be straight or slightly curved and should not curl over back or side kink.

**FOREQUARTERS-** There should be no tendency to weakness in the forequarters. Shoulders should be sloping with full liberty of action, plenty of power and without any restrictions of movement. Legs should be medium in length and straight, showing good bone and muscle. Pasterns slightly bent and of medium length. The front legs should appear straight when viewed from front or rear. Dewclaws on the forelegs may be removed. Well webbed hare feet should be of good size with toes wellrounded and close.

**HINDQUARTERS-** Good hindquarters are essential. They should show fully as much power as the forequarters. There should be no tendency to weakness in the hindquarters. Hindquarters should be especially powerful to supply the driving power for swimming. Legs should be medium length and straight, showing good bone and muscle. Stifles should be well angulated. The distance from hock to ground should be of medium length. The hind legs should look straight when viewed from the front or rear. Dewclaws, if any, must be removed from the rear legs. Disqualifications: Dewclaws on the hind legs are a disqualification.

**COAT-** Coat should be thick and short, nowhere over 1 1/2" long, with a dense fine wooly undercoat. Hair on the face and legs should be very short and straight with a tendency to wave on the shoulders, neck, back and loins only. Moderate feathering on the rear of the hindquarters and tail is permissible.

The texture of the Chesapeake's coat is very important, as the Chesapeake is used for hunting under all sorts of adverse weather conditions, often working in ice and snow. The oil in the harsh outer coat and wooly undercoat is of extreme value in preventing the cold water from reaching the Chesapeake's skin and aids in quick drying. A Chesapeake's coat should resist the water in the same way that a duck's feathers do. When the Chesapeake leaves the water and shakes, the coat should not hold water at all, being merely moist.

Disqualifications: A coat that is curly or has a tendency to curl all over the body must be disqualified. Feathering on the tail or legs over 1 3/4" long must be disqualified.

**COLOR-** The color of the Chesapeake Bay Retriever must be nearly that of its working surroundings as possible. Any color of brown, sedge, or deadgrass is acceptable, selfcolored Chesapeakes being preferred. One color is not to be preferred over another. A white spot on the breast, belly, toes or back of feet (immediately above the large pad) is permissible, but the smaller the spot the better, solid colored preferred. The color of the coat and its texture must be given every consideration when judging on the bench or in the ring. Honorable scars are not to be penalized.

Disqualifications: Black colored; white on any part of the body except breast, belly, toes or back of feet must be disqualified.

**GAIT-** The gait should be smooth, free and effortless, giving the impression of great power and strength. When viewed from the side, there should be good reach with no restrictions of movement in front and plenty of drive in the rear, with flexion of stifle and hock joints. Coming at you, there should be no signs of elbows being out. When the Chesapeake is moving away from you, there should be no sign of cowhockness from the rear. As speed increases, the feet tend to converge toward a center line of gravity.

**TEMPERAMENT-** The Chesapeake Bay Retriever should show a bright and happy disposition with an intelligent expression. Courage, willingness to work, alertness, nose, intelligence, love of water, general quality and, most of all, disposition should be given primary consideration in the selection and breeding of the Chesapeake Bay Retriever.

### **DISQUALIFICATIONS**

1. Specimens lacking in breed characteristics.
2. Teeth overshot or undershot.
3. Dewclaws on hind legs.
4. Coat curly or with a tendency to curl all over the body.
5. Feathering on the tail or legs over 1 3/4" long.
6. Black colored.
7. White on any part of the body except breast, belly, toes or back of feet.

The question of coat and general type of balance takes precedence over any scoring table which could be drawn up. The Chesapeake should be well proportioned, an animal with a good coat and well balanced in other points being preferable to one excelling in some but weak in others.

**Positive Scale of Points | Approximate Measurements**

		<b>Inches</b>
Head, including lips, ears and eyes =	16	Length head, nose to 9 1/2 occiput = to 10
Neck =	4	Girth at ears = 20 to 21
Shoulders and Body =	12	Muzzle below eyes = 10 to 10 1/2
Hindquarters and Stifles =	12	Length of ears = 4 1/2 to 5
Elbows, Legs and Feet =	12	2 1/2 Width between eyes = to 2 3/4
Color =	4	Girth neck close to 20 to shoulder = 22
Stern and Tail =	10	Girth at flank = 24 to 25
Coat and Texture =	18	Length from occiput to 34 to tail base = 35
General Conformation =	12	Girth forearms at 10 to shoulders = 10 1/2
		Girth upper thigh = 19 to 20
<b>Total = 100</b>		From root to root of ear over skull = 5 to 6
		Occiput to top shoulder 9 to 9 blades = 1/2
		From elbow to elbow 25 to over the shoulders = 26

**APPROVED: NOVEMBER 9, 1993**  
**EFFECTIVE: DECEMBER 31, 1993**

## Revisions to the Chesapeake Bay Retriever Standard

---

The following is a list of the revisions made to the Chesapeake Bay Retriever standard. We hope this will help you more clearly understand these changes and the reasons for which they were made.

There is a new general appearance section. There are several important points to note from this new section. Comments were expressed that far too many short muzzles were appearing and being rewarded in the ring. So, regarding the head, additional information was added on the muzzle shape: "the jaws should be of sufficient length and strength ...". A definite point is now made that the coat should be a double coat. Size was the issue that was of greatest concern to Chesapeake breeders. To further emphasize size, the following phrasing was added here: "In body, the Chesapeake is a strong, well balanced, powerfully built animal of moderate size and medium length in body and leg, deep and wide in chest, the shoulders built with full liberty of movement, and with no tendency to weakness in any feature, particularly the rear. The power though should not be at the expense of agility or stamina. Size and substance should not be excessive as this is a working retriever of an active nature." Temperament was also addressed: extreme shyness or aggressive tendencies are not desirable. Particular emphasis is made on how these physical traits correlate to the working aspects of the breed.

Under **Size, Proportion, Substance**, there is now a proportional description of the body. "Height from the top of the shoulder blades to the ground should be slightly less than the body length from the breastbone to the point of buttocks. Depth of body should extend at least to the elbow. Shoulder to elbow and elbow to ground should be equal." Dogs too high on leg should be faulted just as well as dogs too short in leg. Please reference general appearance section for additional comment regarding size and substance.

**Head** section now includes a sentence on muzzle length to indicate that head proportions from occiput to eyes and eyes to end of nose should be balanced. Tapered was added to further describe that the muzzle shape tapers from below the eyes to the nose. Additional head info, found under general description, asks that muzzle be of sufficient length and strength. While not new to the standard, please remember that lips should be thin, not pendulous. Note that nothing in this head description asks for short muzzles, blockiness or cheekiness.

**Bite** has two significant changes. There is now a preference for a scissors bite, with level acceptable. The disqualification for "or any deformity" has been dropped. Undershot and overshot bites remain disqualifications.

Under **Neck, Topline, Body**, the word ribcage was added to make it clearer that it is the ribcage that is to be barrel round and deep. In other words, there should be some spring to the ribs. Chesapeakes should not be slabsided. It was found that many judges were interpreting "approaching hollowness" as meaning a hollow back /dip in back. That was not and is not the correct interpretation of that phrase. To help make it clearer, the wording "from underneath" was added to more precisely explain that term "approaching hollowness" refers to the tuck up that should be present in the loin area. Under Tail, it now only asks that the tail be of medium length. With this wording, as long as the tail is in a proportional look to the rest of the dog, it is fine. It no longer has to extend to the hock.

In the **Hindquarters** section, it now says: "The distance from hock to ground should be of medium length." This more accurately describes what is desired.

The **Coat** section had one change. It now states that " Moderate feathering on rear of hindquarters and tail is permissible". Previously, the word stern was listed with tail when it (stern) actually referred to the rear of the hindquarters.

**Color** had several changes and clarifications. The color term "sedge" was added "Any color of brown, sedge or deadgrass is acceptable, selfcolored Chesapeakes being preferred. One color is not to be preferred over another." This also makes it clearer that the selfcolor pattern is the preferred one. Selfcolor meaning "Whole color. Of one color all over, with or without lighter or darker shadings of the same color." The breed does come in other coloration patterns e.g. domino like markings, agouti, tan points, and saddle markings. They should not be disqualified, they are simply not preferred. Since color is only 4 pts., quality specimens with minor variations from selfcolor should not be pegged down to a mediocre selfcolored animal. Regarding the allowable white on the dogs, clarification was made in two ways. "A white spot on the breast, belly, toes or back of feet (immediately above the larger pad) is permissible, but the smaller the spot the better, solidcolored preferred." Notice back of feet is added and the location of the white on the back of feet (front and/or rear legs) is specified. The phrase solid colored preferred now appears at the end of phrase on allowable white. This should make it clearer to you that while white is permissible in certain areas, the preference is for no white. Along with that, remember it says "the smaller the spot the better". So, quality dogs with several areas of white are not as desirable as quality dogs with little or no white. Key word here is quality. A mediocre dog with no white should never be placed over a better quality specimen with white. Please note the addition of " Honorable scars are not to be penalized."

**Gait** A gait description is now included in the standard. We did not feel it necessary to list every movement fault that might be present. It is presumed that judges are aware of what constitutes good movement. Only those that most seriously restrict liberty of movement or weakness in the rear were specifically mentioned out at elbows, cow hocks, lack of full flexion of stifle and hock joints. For efficient swimming ability, good reach and drive are most critical. As speed increases, the feet tend to converge toward a center line of gravity. However, the Chesapeake should not be expected to be a true single tracking mover.

**Disqualifications** Two disqualifications were dropped: "Unworthy" and "Or any deformity".

Technically, by the former standard, if a judge felt a dog was not worthy of a ribbon for whatever reason, the dog should have been disqualified. Some judges were not withholding ribbons for this reason. So, it was removed to allow the judges to withhold ribbons without having to dq the dog. The deformity disqualification was subject to a wide variety of interpretations. As such, it caused much confusion and misuse, so it was dropped. A clarification was added in the disqualifications. "Back of feet" was added to the allowable white section: "White on any part of the body except breast, belly, toes or back of feet". Specific location of the white on the back of feet is found in the color section in the body of the standard