

Chesapeake Bay Retrievers

A shipwreck in 1807 off the shores of the Chesapeake Bay is the origin of the Chesapeake Bay retriever. Two Newfoundland puppies were rescued from that wreck and bred to local hunting dogs to establish a rugged hunting companion for both the individual and market hunter. Over the next 70 years the progeny of these two dogs were bred for their stamina and ability to locate and retrieve birds on both land and water. In 1878, the first Chesapeake was registered with the American Kennel Club.

The Chesapeake's natural instincts, prey drive, and sense of smell and vision, coupled with their desire to please their owner, make this breed a true "hunting partner". These attributes apply equally well to both waterfowl hunting and upland game hunting.

A Chesapeake will work upland birds for the hunter quartering within gun range in search of the bird, then flushing rather than pointing. This close work allows the hunter to be in easy range for a shot when the bird is flushed. Quartering seem to be a natural attribute of the Chesapeake. A dog new to hunting will require more direction than the seasoned veteran to work wind patterns more effectively and within shooting range.

Chesapeakes are an intense breed, and this shows in their upland game work. Once evidence of game is discovered, the dog's interest will intensify. There may be a quick change in direction, the nose will go down, the ears up, the gait will quicken and be more deliberate moving towards the bird. A sure sign that game has been scented is the suddenly intensified movement of the tail, almost as if they are waving a signal flag. No thickness of ground cover, bog or body of water should deter the Chesapeake in the pursuit of his bird. When upon the bird some dogs may attempt to retrieve the bird as it flushes, unable to contain their excitement.

As the bird is flushed to wing the young inexperienced dog may continue the chase, even becoming airborne, whereas the well-trained seasoned dog should be trained to sit to the flush, eagerly awaiting release to retrieve his bird. Chesapeakes have proven to be excellent at both marking downed birds as well as tracking wounded birds. Upon retrieving the bird, the dog should return directly to the hunter bird in mouth and release the bird undamaged. This is very important as game birds are meant for the table, and must be carried gently. Dogs vary, but a well-trained Chesapeake will generally exhibit a firm but not damaging grip of the live and dead birds. The dog should readily deliver to hand upon reaching the hunter, anticipating the hunt for the next bird.