

Photo credit: Barb Loree

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR JUDGES OF GOLDEN RETRIEVERS

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**BELOW IS A WONDERFUL REFLECTION THAT APPLIES EQUALLY TO JUDGES AS WELL AS OWNERS AND BREEDERS OF GOLDEN RETRIEVERS. PLEASE ALWAYS REMEMBER THE GOLDEN IS "PRIMARILY A HUNTING DOG".**—Ainslie Mills, *GRCA Judge's Education Chair*

I know that it is not realistic to expect most Golden owners in this day and age to hunt with their Golden. I do think it is realistic to expect them to know just what constitutes hunting and what is needed in a good hunting dog. When Golden were developed, they were expected to

have the courage to bust through that dense, harsh, wiry heather and bracken to retrieve their game. They were expected to trail down crippled game using their nose and intelligence. They had to willingly swim across swift, icy streams or rivers to retrieve those pheasants that had set their wings and flew a considerable distance before going down. They had to have the stamina and athletic ability to cover that steep and rocky terrain for long days spent in driving, cold rain, snow flurries and harsh winds. They needed the trainability to work with their handler as a team and not go into business for themselves. They needed the temperament to hunt with other dogs without the fear of fights developing. They needed

a strong work ethic and the drive and desire to pursue their game under the most adverse conditions and remember, they retrieved both fur and feathers. If the dogs did not have these attributes, they were not used for reproduction. The Scots are pragmatists!

A good hunting dog is what can turn a miserable hunting day into a success. They hear ducks coming in long before the hunter sees or hears them. They use their abilities to prevent dead birds or cripples being left in the field. They are marvelous companions while you are waiting and are great to have curl up against your cold feet and keep them warm. Even old dogs eagerly await the start of hunting season. They love it. They live for it. ■