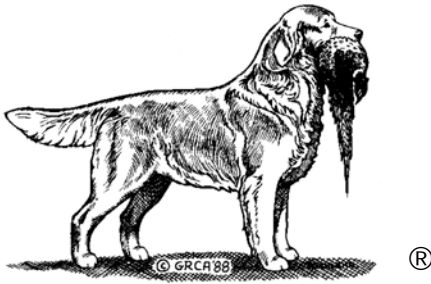


The Golden Retriever: An Illustrated Guide to the Breed





Golden Retriever Club of America

The Judges' Education Committee of the GRCA has various materials available for those wishing to further their understanding of the Golden Retriever. Consult www.grca.org for additional information. Some of these materials include:

- DVD: *The Golden Retriever*, produced by Rachel Page Elliott for GRCA. Consult www.grca.org for order information.
- Video/DVD: *The Golden Retriever*, produced by AKC 1991. 20 min. May be purchased from AKC.
- Booklet: *A Study of the Golden Retriever*. By Marcia R Schlehr. 1994 edition; Softcover; 64 pages, dozens of illustrations, concise text covering all aspects of structure, movement, breed type and character for exhibitors, breeders, and judges. Consult www.grca.org for order information.
- Booklet: *An Introduction to the Golden Retriever*, 75 page booklet produced by the GRCA General information about the breed, not specifically for judges. \$5.00. It has a bibliography of books on the breed, addresses for further information. Consult www.grca.org for order information.

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AKC Breed Standard for the Golden Retriever

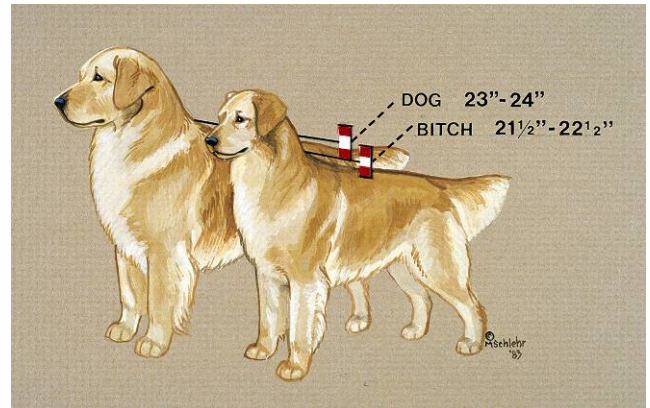


General Appearance

A symmetrical, powerful, active dog, sound and well put together, not clumsy nor long in the leg, displaying a kindly expression and possessing a personality that is eager, alert and self-confident. Primarily a hunting dog, he should be shown in hard working condition. Overall appearance, balance, gait and purpose to be given more emphasis than any of his component parts. **Faults**-Any departure from the described ideal shall be considered faulty to the degree to which it interferes with the breed's purpose or is contrary to breed character.

Size, Proportion, Substance

Males 23-24 inches in height at withers; females 21½-22½ inches. Dogs up to one inch above or below standard size should be proportionately penalized. Deviation in height of more than one inch from the standard shall *disqualify*. Length from breastbone to point of buttocks slightly greater than height at withers in ratio of 12:11. Weight for dogs 65-75 pounds; bitches 55-65 pounds.



Head

Broad in skull, slightly arched laterally and longitudinally without prominence of frontal bones (forehead) or occipital bones. *Stop* well defined but not abrupt. *Foreface* deep and wide, nearly as long as skull. **Muzzle** straight in profile, blending smooth and strongly into skull; when viewed in profile or from above, slightly deeper and wider at stop than at tip. No heaviness in flews. Removal of whiskers is permitted but not preferred. **Eyes** friendly and intelligent in expression, medium large with dark, close-fitting rims, set well apart and reasonably deep in sockets. Color preferably dark brown; medium brown acceptable. Slant eyes and narrow, triangular eyes detract from correct expression and are to be faulted. No white or haw visible when looking straight ahead. Dogs showing evidence of functional abnormality of eyelids or eyelashes (such as, but not limited to, trichiasis, entropion, ectropion, or distichiasis) are to be excused from the ring. **Ears** rather short with front edge attached well behind and just above the eye and falling close to cheek. When pulled forward, tip of ear should just cover the eye. Low, hound-like ear set to be faulted. **Nose** black or brownish black, though fading to a lighter shade in cold weather not serious. Pink nose or one seriously lacking in pigmentation to be faulted. **Teeth** scissors bite, in which the outer side of the lower incisors touches the inner side of the



upper incisors. Undershot or overshot bite is a *disqualification*. Misalignment of teeth (irregular placement of incisors) or a level bite (incisors meet each other edge to edge) is undesirable, but not to be confused with undershot or overshot. Full dentition. Obvious gaps are serious faults.

Neck, Topline, Body

Neck medium long, merging gradually into well laid back shoulders, giving sturdy, muscular appearance. No throatiness. **Backline** strong and level from withers to slightly sloping croup, whether standing or moving. Sloping backline, roach or sway back, flat or steep croup to be faulted. **Body** well balanced, short coupled, deep through the chest. **Chest** between forelegs at least as wide as a man's closed hand including thumb, with well developed forechest. Brisket extends to elbow. **Ribs** long and well sprung but not barrel shaped,



extending well towards hindquarters. **Loin** short, muscular, wide and deep, with very little tuck-up. Slab-sidedness, narrow chest, lack of depth in brisket, excessive tuck-up to be faulted. **Tail** well set on, thick and muscular at the base, following the natural line of the croup. Tail bones extend to, but not below, the point of hock. Carried with merry action, level or with some moderate upward curve; never curled over back nor between legs.

Forequarters

Muscular, well coordinated with hindquarters and capable of free movement. **Shoulder blades** long and well laid back with upper tips fairly close together at withers. **Upper arms** appear about the same length as the blades, setting the elbows back beneath the upper tip of the blades, close to the ribs without looseness. **Legs**, viewed from the front, straight with good bone, but not to the point of coarseness. **Pasterns** short and strong, sloping slightly with no suggestion of weakness. Dewclaws on forelegs may be removed, but are normally left on. **Feet** medium size, round, compact, and well knuckled, with thick pads. Excess hair may be trimmed to show natural size and contour. Splayed or hare feet to be faulted.

Hindquarters

Broad and strongly muscled. Profile of croup slopes slightly; the pelvic bone slopes at a slightly greater angle (approximately 30 degrees from horizontal). In a natural stance, the femur joins the pelvis at approximately a 90-degree angle; **stifles** well bent; **hocks** well let down with short, strong **rear pasterns**. **Feet** as in front. **Legs** straight when viewed from rear. Cow-hocks, spread hocks, and sickle hocks to be faulted.

Coat

Dense and water-repellent with good undercoat. Outer coat firm and resilient, neither coarse nor silky, lying close to body; may be straight or wavy. Untrimmed natural ruff; moderate feathering on back of forelegs and on underbody; heavier feathering on front of neck, back of thighs and underside of tail. Coat on head, paws, and front of legs is short and even. Excessive length, open coats, and limp, soft coats are very undesirable.

Feet may be trimmed and stray hairs neatened, but the natural appearance of coat or outline should not be altered by cutting or clipping.

Color

Rich, lustrous golden of various shades. Feathering may be lighter than rest of coat. With the exception of graying or whitening of face or body due to age, any white marking, other than a few white hairs on the chest, should be penalized according to its extent. Allowable light shadings are not to be confused with white markings. Predominant body color which is either extremely pale or extremely dark is undesirable. Some latitude should be given to the light puppy whose coloring shows promise of deepening with maturity. Any noticeable area of black or other off-color hair is a serious fault.



Gait

When trotting, gait is free, smooth, powerful and well coordinated, showing good reach. Viewed from any position, legs turn neither in nor out, nor do feet cross or interfere with each other. As speed increases, feet tend to converge toward center line of balance. It is recommended that dogs be shown on a loose lead to reflect true gait.

Temperament

Friendly, reliable, and trustworthy. Quarrelsomeness or hostility towards other dogs or people in normal situations, or an unwarranted show of timidity or nervousness, is not in keeping with Golden Retriever character. Such actions should be penalized according to their significance.

Disqualifications

Deviation in height of more than one inch from standard either way.
Undershot or overshot bite.

Approved October 13, 1981
Reformatted August 18, 1990

Judging the Golden Retriever



The Golden Retriever is one of the most popular and versatile of all breeds. The breed performs as a pet, show dog, performance competition dog, service dog, search and rescue dog, detector dog, dog guide but was developed primarily as a hunting companion. It is a dog of normal canine structure with sufficient size, strength and stamina to function as a retriever on both land and in the water but small enough

to be pulled from the water and fit in a blind or duck boat. Retrievers are dogs of moderation, with a muscular, athletic appearance; strong, medium long, muscular necks; weather-proof, water-resistant and protective coats; strong well-arched, webbed feet with useful nails and a well set on tail, useful in balance for movement and as a swimming aid.

Key points for consideration

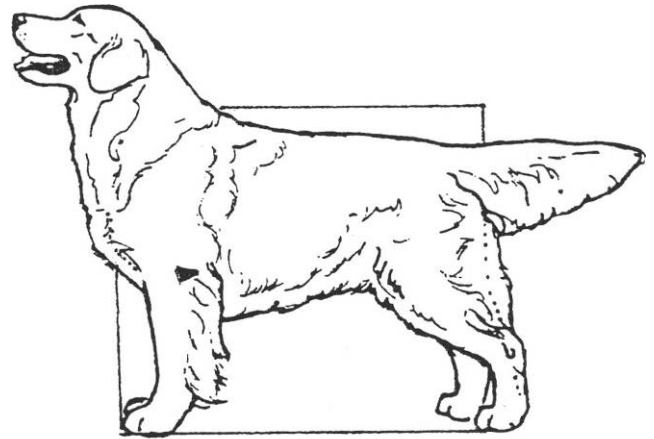
- *The Golden Retriever should not be judged as a generic show dog, or with undue emphasis on presentation, showy attitude or abundant coat, which are mere glamour points.*
- *Important considerations are suitability for function as an athletic, working gundog with overall balance, condition, and muscle tone, a correct, firm resilient coat texture and a dense undercoat providing a waterproof jacket.*
- *Judges should not focus on pieces or parts of the dog, whether correct or faulty, but consider over-all appearance, balance, gait and fitness for purpose.*
- *This is a hands-on breed, requiring the use of hands to assess the structure underneath the coat as artful grooming can disguise faults of structure upon visual examination. A more accurate assessment of structure can be made by a careful examination with the hands.*
- *Judges should not mistake excessive speed or extreme "reach and drive" for correct gait. Correct movement should be easy, smooth, ground-covering and efficient, allowing a Golden to work all day in the field. Goldens should be shown at a moderate working trot on a loose lead.*
- *Golden temperament should be eager, alert and self-confident and not constantly "turned on" or busy in nature.*
- *Judges should at some point observe this breed free-standing, in a natural stance, from various angles.*



General Appearance

The General Appearance section of the Golden Retriever breed standard is extremely important in establishing priorities in judging the breed. Golden Retriever type can be

further refined by focusing on the breed essentials of purpose, breed character and temperament, size and proportion, head, coat and color. One of the joys of this breed is the variety of styles seen in the breed, but any variations must always be assessed in consideration of the breed standard. This is a hands-on breed, requiring careful examination under the coat for structural reference points in order to adequately assess qualities that may be altered by creative grooming or obscured by excessive coat. Judges should ensure they place hands under the coat to feel for the forechest, tip of shoulder blades, length of upper arm, depth of body to the elbows, tight fitting elbows, good length and spring of rib, short, deep loin, bend of stifle, hindquarter muscle mass and correct tail set and length.



Size, Proportion and Substance

The judge's initial impression of the Golden Retriever should be a dog of moderation and over-all balance. There is a **disqualification** for size, with no exemption for puppies. The standard has a disqualification for deviation in height more than one inch over or under the prescribed size range. Many puppies do not reach the minimum size by six months of age and judges should not hesitate to measure suspected over-sized or under-sized exhibits.

The standard calls for a proportion ratio of 11:12 based on the height from withers to ground and length from prosternum to seat bone. To the average eye, this is only slightly off square. The distance from withers to elbow and elbow to ground should be approximately equal. Many Goldens today are lacking the correct proportions and appear long and lower to the ground than what the standard requires. Length in the body should come from a well developed rib cage which extends well back, as the Golden should be relatively short-coupled and not long in loin.



Head

The head is one of the hallmarks of the breed. Correct head structure is important to the retrieving function of the breed, relating to vision, scenting and carrying of the game. The head should be clean cut with a broad, slightly arched skull and a definite stop. The skull and the deep, wide, slightly tapering muzzle have nearly parallel planes, with the muzzle nearly as long as the skull. Strong muzzles and back-skulls are necessary for carrying heavy game, as a large goose can weigh 10 to 12 pounds.

Full dentition is preferred, with a scissors bite. Undershot or overshot mouths are a **disqualification**. It is necessary to examine the side teeth for obvious gaps in dentition, but it is not necessary to count teeth.

The expression should be warm, intelligent and friendly, ideally highlighted with black pigment on the nose, eye rims and lips. The medium large, dark brown eye should be an open almond shape, with tight, dark rims. Correct eye placement is important for direct and peripheral vision and tight-fitting eye rims prevent debris from entering the eye.

Any dog showing a functional abnormality of the eyelids or eyelashes, for whatever reason, should be excused from the ring. This can include excessive tearing, swelling, difference in appearance between the eyes, etc.

The nose should be of good size with large, open nostrils suitable for scenting. Preferably black, many Golden noses will fade with age or season. As long as there is a dark perimeter to the nose, it is not a Dudley nose, which is to be faulted. Ears should be rather short, soft and flexible, reaching only to the inner corner of the same-side eye. The forward edge of the ear should be set well behind and just above eye level when at rest. The head should be examined with the ears in a relaxed position. Alert ears can be considered more when assessing the Golden's expression but a Golden should not be expected to constantly "show ears". Please note that removal of whiskers is optional and not preferred in a hunting breed.

Head faults include narrow back-skulls, insufficient length and depth of muzzle, excessive flews, lack of adequate stop, poorly set and/or shaped eyes, large or low set ears, and misalignment of incisors.

Neck, Topline and Body

The body of the Golden should not appear coarse or overdone but well-conditioned and athletic with moderate substance. The chest should reach to the elbows and should be broad with a well developed forechest that is well-filled beneath the prosternum. The neck is "medium long, merging gradually into well laid back shoulder, giving a sturdy, muscular ppearance." The neck needs to be strong and well-muscled, with sufficient length for the dog to pick up and carry a bird with ease. The backline is strong and level from withers to slightly sloping croup, whether standing or moving. A sloping, setter-like topline is undesirable. There is little tuck-up and the loin is short, broad and muscular.

The tail does not come directly off the back but follows the natural line of the croup. It should be noticeably thicker at the base than at the tip and the bone length should reach to the hock joint. The function of the tail is to act as a rudder both in the water and on land, not as a sail. As such, the tail should be carried with a merry action, level with the back or with a slight upward curve. It should never be over the back or between the legs.

Forequarters and Hindquarters:

The front and hind quarters should appear equally balanced, well muscled and capable of free, easy movement. The standard is clear in requiring well laid back, long shoulder blades with an upper arm of equal length and good return, so the elbows are placed directly beneath the upper tips of the shoulder blades. Short, upright upper arms which place the legs too far forward are a problem in the breed.

The straight front legs should have strong, moderate bone with tight, compact, well-knuckled feet. Remember the correct equal proportions between withers to elbow and elbow to ground. Pasterns should appear strong and slightly sloping for adequate shock absorption. Dewclaws are normally left on but may be removed.

Hindquarters must be strong, broad and well muscled. Judges should examine the muscling in the thighs for conditioning. Stifles should be well-bent but not over-angulated, with strong, short rear pasterns. The rear legs should be straight when viewed from behind, with no evidence of cow-hocks or sickle hocks.

Coat and Color:

Color is probably one of the most common variants seen in the breed. The standard specifies "lustrous golden of various shades" which allows a broad range of color, ranging from cream to a coppery gold, with allowable



lighter feathering. This variation in color is



one of the breed's attractions. Extremes of light and dark of the predominant body color are considered undesirable. Many Goldens begin to grey as early as four to five years of age and graying of the head and body due to age is not to be penalized. Incorrect white markings that are to be faulted usually appear on the toes,

chest or head. Any noticeable areas of black or off-color hair should be faulted.

Much more important than color in any assessment of the coat, is the **texture**. It must be firm, resilient, dense, and water-repellent with a good undercoat and lying close to the body. It may be either **straight or wavy!** Often coats with a slight wave have a more correct texture. Soft, limp, silky coats absorb water and lack the protective qualities of a correct coat. Excessive body coat and furnishings are not in keeping with the function of the breed as a hunting dog and should be faulted. On land, excessive coat can get caught on brush and will tend to pick up all manner of debris that can take hours to brush out of the coat. In the water, excessive coat, especially soft coat, will absorb a considerable amount of water, making it more work for the dog to swim. The dog will tire much more easily as a result of dragging all that extra weight around.

The standard specifies "The natural appearance of coat or outline should not be altered by cutting or clipping, other than the trimming of the feet and neatening of stray hairs". Excessive grooming often creates an incorrect "open" coat rather than the correct, protective coat which sheds debris and water.



Gait

The Golden should be moved on a **loose leash** at a moderate speed and exhibit a smooth, free, powerful, well-coordinated gait with a tendency to converge (both front and rear) as speed increases. The head should not be held high or pulled up on a tight lead. In order to maintain kinetic balance, the Golden will lower its head and thus allow for easier reach in front and more efficient movement. The backline should remain level and the tail carriage should be level or with some upward curve, but never up over the back or between the legs. Current movement problems in the breed include short, choppy strides, overdone reach and drive, where the feet are lifted too high off the

ground for efficient ground-covering motion, a lack of convergence, especially in the front, all of which can result in an incorrect roaching over the loin or an undesirable bounce in the topline.

Temperament

Eager, alert, self-confident, friendly, reliable, trustworthy. The temperament of the Golden Retriever is renowned. There should be no tolerance for any display of hostility or aggressiveness towards other dogs or people or any undue timidity or nervousness. Goldens should not always be “turned on” in the ring. They should be relaxed and accepting of what is going on around them, not constantly looking for bait or exhibiting excitable behavior.

Presentation

The Golden Retriever should be presented as a natural, athletic, hunting dog. Excessive baiting, stringing up the neck and front by the collar or by a tight leash when moving should not be tolerated by judges. Coats should lie flat as a water-proof jacket and not be overly prepared through the use of products or excessive fluffing with blow dryers. Any evidence of alteration of the coat, which does not allow the judge to access its correct texture should be severely penalized, as should trimming or scissoring of the coat beyond the allowances made in the standard for neatening ears and feet. Any evidence of alteration of the natural color of the coat or nose should be dealt with according to AKC regulations concerning the use of foreign substances.

Primarily a hunting dog

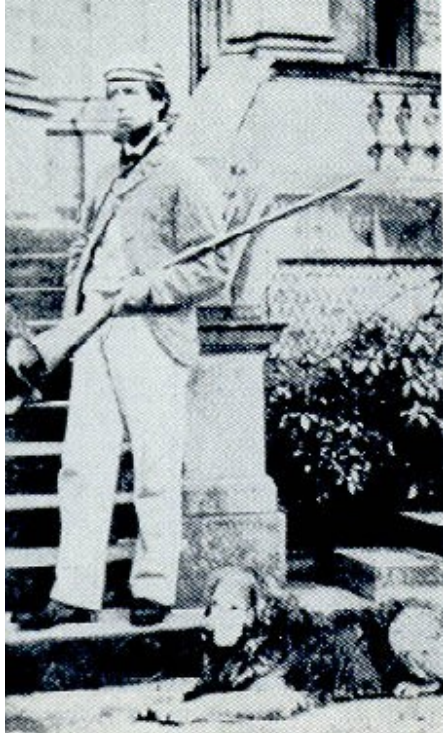
Compiled by the Golden Retriever Club of America Judges' Education Committee.

A Brief History of the Golden Retriever

In the 1800s in Scotland and England, hunting was both sport and a practical way of obtaining food. Retrievers became popular when the breech-loading shotgun demanded an efficient retrieving dog for both waterfowl and upland game. All retriever breeds can trace back to the water-loving St Johns dog of Newfoundland, ancestor of the wavy-coated retriever which contributed to both the Flat-Coat and the Golden.

The most complete records of the origin of the Golden Retriever are included in the record book kept from about 1840 until 1890 by Dudley Marjoribanks, first Lord Tweedmouth, at his





Nous with gamekeeper at Guisachan

Scottish Highlands. These records were made public in 1952 by great-nephew, the sixth Lord Ilchester. Further information and research was published by Elma Stonex.

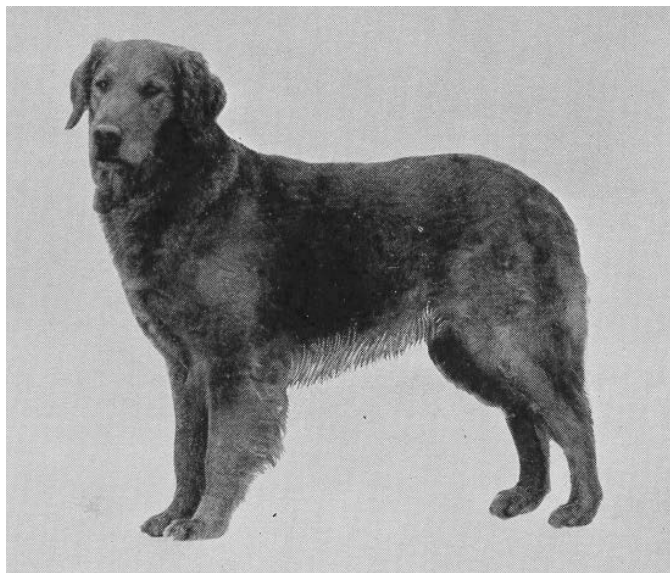
In 1865 Dudley Marjoribanks bought "Nous", the single yellow pup in a litter of black wavy-coated retrievers. Photos of Nous show a handsome, sturdy dog with a wavy coat, quite recognizably a Golden. Nous was bred with Belle, a Tweed Water Spaniel, resulting in four yellow pups that became the foundation of the breed. Through several generations of clever breeding, Marjoribanks created a consistent line of exceptional working retrievers. To the main line from Nous and Belle, he added another Tweed Water Spaniel, a couple of black wavy-coated retrievers, and a red setter, retaining primarily the yellow pups. Working ability and retrieving aptitude were paramount, requiring a strong, biddable dog that could withstand cold and cope with the demanding terrain of the Highlands.

The now extinct Tweed Water Spaniel was native to the east coast of southern Scotland, particularly in the area of the Tweed River near Berwick, and was used both to retrieve game and to assist fishermen. The Tweed spaniels were "light liver" in color, with a fairly short, close-curved coat only slightly feathered. "Liver" at that time could be used to describe anything from dark brown to light sandy color. Stanley O'Neill, the Flat-Coat historian, described them as more retriever than spaniel in appearance.



Culham Brass delivers to game-keeper's hand (UK, circa 1908)

Some of the Tweedmouth retrievers were given to friends and relatives, but the strain remained largely unknown until after 1900. The winner of the first field trial for retrievers, in 1904, was sired by a Tweedmouth dog. A few "yellow retrievers" were registered with the Kennel Club as "Retrievers (Wavy or Flat-Coated)", but did not appear in dog shows until 1908, in classes for Flat-Coats "of any other color". One of the earliest exhibitors, Mrs. W. M. Charlesworth, was nearly single-handedly responsible for recognition of the "Goldens" in their own right, in 1913.



BIS Am. Can. Ch Speedwell Pluto

While some Golden Retrievers were brought to North America before either the American Kennel Club or the Canadian Kennel Club officially recognized the breed, the first Golden was registered by the AKC in 1925. But the real foundation sire of the Golden Retriever here was Am. Can. Ch. Speedwell Pluto, whelped in 1929 in England and imported by Col. Samuel Magoffin (Rockhaven Kennels) to British Columbia. Through further importations and family connections, Golden Retrievers became established before World War II in several areas of the USA, and after the War, grew steadily in popularity, with a pronounced surge of registrations in the 1970s.

While the Golden's kindly expression and distinctive "double" golden coat are appealing, his natural qualities of amiable temperament, trainability, willingness, useful size, and sturdy physique have equipped him for a variety of practical uses in addition to that of personal hunting dog; among them, guide dog for the blind, assistance/service dog, Search and Rescue, and tracking and scenting specialist. In organized dog sports the breed is widely popular in Obedience Trials (the first three Obedience Trial Champions were Golden Retrievers), Hunting Tests and Agility. Registrations of Golden Retrievers have remained in the "top ten" of all breeds for years, attesting to their popularity as companion as well as a worker.



Golden Retrievers from the Rockhaven Kennels (mid/late 1930's)