

## BITE AND DENTITION IN REVIEW

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**PURPOSE:** A normal scissors bite and full dentition are strongly desired for the head shape on the Golden Retriever, and the mouth is essential to its function and purpose. The teeth perform more function than merely holding/tearing and also serve through a sense of touch, which helps with the "soft" mouth vs the "hard" mouth, among other things. Minor irregularities, or a level bite, are less desirable but may be considered relatively minor faults, depending on the individual case, if proper function is not compromised. While a single missing first premolar is a very minor fault, obvious gaps due to missing teeth, particularly the large premolars and molars, do detract from optimum ability to pick up, hold, and carry and may weaken the jaw structure, hence must be considered serious faults.

**ANATOMY:** Bite refers to the occlusion, or contact and alignment of teeth, in the upper and lower jaws. If the upper jaw is longer than the lower jaw the bite is overshot; if the upper jaw is shorter than the lower jaw the bite is undershot. When the bite is level, the teeth in both jaws are in constant contact and often wear down to the gum as the dog ages.

**AKC BREED STANDARD:** *“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.”*

**BACKGROUND:** Years ago, it was not all that uncommon to see Golden Retrievers with major gaps in all four quadrants. Full dentition has improved over the years, at least in conformation lines. Undershot jaws were also far more common in years past, particularly in field lines.

**DISCUSSION:** Broken or damaged teeth from field use are not faulty. A missing incisor (front tooth) that has been knocked out will leave a space but is not a fault; accidents happen. “Gap” refers to obviously missing premolars and molars in the four side quadrants.

**JUDGING:** AKC prefers that handlers show the mouth. Judges may do it themselves (however it's a good idea to use hand sanitizer at frequent intervals.)

The judge must look at the entire mouth, not just the front teeth. Handlers are adept at letting the tongue cover gaps in the lower jaw. Ask them to move the tongue, or run your finger over the lower teeth.

Two dropped central lower incisors is a minor fault. More than two may affect the bite itself.

If the dog cannot close its jaw completely because of incorrect alignment and contact of the side teeth, and the relationship of the front teeth cannot be examined, the dog should be excused.

**REMINDER** from the AKC breed standard: *“Undershot or overshot bite is a disqualification.”*



**Scissors bite (L) (C), Dropped lower incisors (R)**



**Full dentition (L), Obvious gap in dentition (R)**