

Is A Flat Coat Right For You?

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You have obviously been doing some research on purebred dogs, and have gotten this far. Wonderful! Now it is time to ask yourself some questions about the suitability of this breed. Flat Coated Retriever popularity has been on the rise in recent years, thanks primarily to increased national exposure. While all Flat Coat owners think this is the BEST breed in existence, it is definitely a breed that can also be annoying, destructive and stubborn.

- A correct Flat Coat is first and foremost a RETRIEVER - a breed selectively chosen for generations to carry things in their mouths. That includes shoes, underwear, socks, the kid's toys, pillows, all manner of clothing, sticks, dead things and just about anything else you can think of that will fit in his mouth! Discouraging this activity is counter to the dog's instincts, and can result in further destruction as the dog's frustration level increases. If you are unwilling to accept this ingrained behavior in your Flat Coated Retriever, then this breed is NOT for you!
- Flat Coated Retrievers are very slow maturing dogs, and are often referred to as the "Peter Pan" of the dog world. While this can be very charming and endearing, it can also be very frustrating when your 4 year old dog is unable to concentrate in obedience class! If you are looking for a dog to perform advanced tasks at an early age, then Flat Coated Retrievers are not for you.
- Flat Coats can have boundless energy. No kidding, BOUNDLESS. Their exercise requirements are considerable, especially as youngsters, and obedience training is a must if you hope to have a livable dog. Exposure to and training for field work is an ideal way to direct that energy, and to maintain your dog's working instincts. We encourage all Flat Coated Retriever owners to participate in field events at any level (hunting or formal field events), if possible. Other suitable activities include retrieving for fun, any dog sport that engages the dog's mind AND body (tracking, obedience, agility, etc.) swimming, jogging, etc. If you think you may not have the time or interest to address a Flat Coat's exercise requirements, then this breed may not be for you.
- Flat Coated Retrievers do not have a long average lifespan. Cancer has been a problem in our breed for years, and the Flat Coated Retriever Society of America is funding research projects to look into this problem. No Flat Coat, of any age, is safe from cancer. Two long-lived dogs can be bred together, and produce puppies that die at age 3. There is no test to learn if your dog is at risk, and heartbreak can strike any time. Despite our best efforts, there is NO breeder who can guarantee their pups won't be affected, and there are NO cancer-free lines. If you are unprepared to potentially lose a dog at a young age (the average lifespan

of the FCR is 7 years), then the Flat Coated Retriever is probably not the breed for you.

- Flat Coated Retrievers can be soft dogs in training, requiring fair and thoughtful training methods. There is a current trend toward totally positive training, and that is not 100% effective with most Flat Coats either! Being a creative trainer will get the most from your Flat Coat. Obedience training is a must for this active breed, so if you don't want to spend the time teaching your dog basic obedience, then you might want to consider a different breed.
- Flat Coated Retrievers LOVE mud! "Wallowing" is a well-known phenomenon in this breed. If there is any kind of puddle, your Flat Coat will find it, and will roll around in it, dunking her head and getting thoroughly filthy! Then she will jump up with a big smile, and run over to you and plant her paws on your chest! If you can't laugh about it or keep a hose handy (for rinsing), then Flat Coats may not be the breed for you.
- Flat Coated Retrievers have another terrible habit: coprophagia. That is a polite term for eating stools! Flat Coats of all ages and sexes seem to be affected, and there is no cure. Believe us, everything has been tried! You either have to clean up all stools IMMEDIATELY, or be willing to deal with the consequences. If this habit disgusts you, please think about another breed.
- Flat Coated Retrievers shed, both seasonally (heavy shedding) and with little bits coming off all year. Every spring, you will be vacuum daily! Flat Coats do require at least a good brushing on a regular basis to keep their coats free of mats and tangles. If black dog hair floating around your home, in your food and drinks and on your clothing bothers you, then you may want to consider another breed.
- Flat Coated Retrievers do not fare well being left in the backyard all day long with little interaction. This is an intelligent, inquisitive breed that thrives best on human attention. If your time and attention is already at a premium with family events, work or other obligations, then you might want to wait until you have the time and energy to devote to a Flat Coated Retriever.
- Flat Coated Retrievers can be very rambunctious with small children (under the age of 12). While generally Flat Coats are an excellent choice for families with children, care must be taken to supervise any dog that interacts with children. Most importantly, Flat Coats and small kids should not romp and play without an adult supervising the activity. A 70 lb Flat Coat can easily outweigh a 6 year old child, and can inadvertently injure or frighten the child while only meaning to have a ball thrown over and over again! If your kids are very small, you might want to wait before getting a Flat Coated Retriever.

If you have gotten this far, and think you can deal with all of the "bad" things about Flat Coats, then please surf on, and get in touch with us (or another breeder) for more information on the breed! It is best to find a nearby breeder, and make an appointment to visit with the dogs for a few hours, so you can personally meet some Flat Coats before going any further.

In addition to learning what you can about this specific breed, it is useful to complete the following checklist to help you decide if you are ready for a dog of any breed.

- Do you spend enough time at home that you find yourself with free time every day, not just the weekends?
- Are your children well-behaved and polite when around company? We have found that parents who raise respectful, responsible children will also raise respectful, responsible dogs.

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