

## INTRODUCTION

The Golden Retriever is a powerful, active, and intelligent dog well suited for a variety of activities. The characteristically cooperative nature of the Golden makes them the breed of choice for many families, hunters, obedience and show ring competitors, as well as service organizations such as Guide Dogs for the Blind.

The **Badger Golden Retriever Club, Inc.** is dedicated to the preservation of the breed. This pamphlet will give you basic information so that your selection will be based on sound knowledge and a true understanding of what it means to have a Golden Retriever as a member of your family. The Golden is not the dog for everyone! Indeed, many people who want a Golden should seriously consider whether they have the lifestyle to care for any dog at all! Annually thousands of dogs are given up for adoption after their owners discover the extent of work and expense involved in responsible dog ownership. When this happens to older dogs there is often no alternative but to euthanize the animal.

If you do decide on a Golden Retriever, we encourage you to make a conscientious effort to be a responsible dog owner. That means providing proper grooming, feeding, training, and routine veterinary health care for the life of the dog. It also means having your pet spayed or neutered at an early age. Pet dogs should NEVER be bred.

The Golden Retriever is in many ways a unique breed. As a whole, it is probably suited to more people than any other breed and thus has increased tremendously in popularity over the years. With this growth have come a greater number of poorly bred animals that do not reflect the true temperament, sound structure, intelligence and trainability that you have a right to expect when you purchase a dog.

We hope that you are interested in locating a quality-bred puppy or older dog. The **ACQUIRING A GOLDEN RETRIEVER** booklet will give you valuable background information on the breed. It also covers the basics on health concerns, certifications and health clearances, and questions to ask your prospective breeder. This booklet is available free from the Golden Retriever Club of America, P. O. Box 20434, Oklahoma City, OK 73156 or by visiting their web site at [www.grca.org](http://www.grca.org).

## TEMPERMENT

Temperament should be of the utmost importance to you. Though no one can say for sure how much is inherited, there is no doubt that many of the parent's traits will be passed on. It is to your advantage to choose a puppy from parents whose temperament most closely matches what you want in your own dog. A typical Golden is friendly, easy going, relaxed, tolerant, and affectionate. Hyperactivity, shyness, threatening or aggressive behavior towards people (even strangers) are not acceptable traits. Keep in mind that there will be a wide range of personalities evident in any litter. A wise and reputable breeder will be able to match the puppy's apparent temperament to your requirements. For example, a less than firm owner would be a poor match for the dominant puppy.

## **MALES VS. FEMALES**

The choice of gender is merely a matter of personal preference. In Golden Retrievers, aggression (which is different than dominance) is rarely a problem in either sex. Neither males nor females roam more than others, nor is either more difficult to housebreak. Both are excellent with children. Both are calm house pets given adequate exercise. Both are intelligent and affectionate. Either makes an excellent companion. Both have stamina and energy for performance events (such as field work). Both should be spayed or neutered.

## **HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS**

As in many other breeds, popularity and consequent over-breeding of pet animals has led to an increase in the number and seriousness of inherited problems. The wise buyer will ask questions about the health history of the puppy's parents, siblings from previous litters, the parent's siblings, and the grandparents. The more depth there is in freedom from inherited health conditions, the better your chances are of acquiring a healthy puppy. Reputable breeders should certainly "guarantee" your puppy's general health (ex. freedom from parasites). "Guarantees" against the development of serious hereditary problems are a different matter, particularly when puppies are going to pet homes. No one can fully guarantee that a serious health problem will "never" occur. After all, genetics and the breeding of dogs are not an exact science!

HIP DYSPLASIA - refers to a developmental disease of the hip joint. There are varying degrees of severity and the dog may or may not experience problems or pain. Many dogs lead long, normal, and comfortable lives with hip dysplasia in mild stages. "HD" is a polygenic defect which means it is influenced by many factors, including environment. The propensity for HD cannot be determined in a young puppy. It first becomes evident during and after the rapid growth periods when the dog's skeletal structure reaches adulthood. To reduce your chances of having a dog with dysplasia you should only purchase a puppy from parents who are both "OFA Certified". To be certified the parents are x-rayed at a minimum of two years of age and the films are evaluated by expert veterinary radiologists at the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals. Only dogs which are "cleared" are given a certificate and a number. You should ask to see this clearance for both parents. "X-rayed" and "x-rayed clear" are two very different things.

EYE DISEASE - a number of problems occur in Golden Retrievers. Cataracts are common. Other conditions include Central Progressive Retinal Atrophy, eyelids which turn either in or out, and eyelashes which rub on the eye. Examination needs to be done by a Board-certified veterinary ophthalmologist and all breeding stock needs to be cleared. As with Hip Dysplasia as noted above, you should ask to see copies of the written reports or certificates from CERF (Canine Eye Registration Foundation).

ELBOW DYSPLASIA - is a relatively new concern in Golden Retrievers. In 1997 the Golden Retriever Club of America added elbow clearances to their list of provisions in the Code of Ethics that breeders should follow. As with Hip Dysplasia, the OFA (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals) has an evaluation and certification program and you should be able to see a copy of an official report for both the sire and dam of a litter if the breeder follows the Code of Ethics.

HEART DISEASE - most notably SAS (subvalvular Aortic Stenosis). Breeders who follow the GRCA Code of Ethics should have their breeding stock checked for heart disease by an American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine board certified cardiologist. A copy of the report should be available for you to review on both the sire and dam.

OTHER DISEASES - von Willebrands (deficiency of the clotting factor in the blood), hypothyroidism (malfunction of the thyroid gland), epilepsy and seizure disorders, allergies, and some forms of cancer. While all conditions should be checked for before breeding, certifiable clearances are not currently available for many of these conditions.

### **PURCHASING A GOLDEN RETRIEVER**

After you have made your decision to purchase, please give careful consideration to who you will purchase from. Your best choice is always a reputable breeder. Avoid pet shops and private individuals that are not actively involved in professional dog activities (such as dog shows, obedience and field events). The person you buy from should be able to demonstrate their involvement, show you quality breeding stock, and provide appropriate health clearances. You should feel comfortable talking to them and feel secure that they are giving you honest straightforward answers to questions. Don't be surprised if they ask detailed questions as well! The reputable breeder is interested in more than just selling a dog. They may be very selective about placing their dogs with the right owners, and into the right conditions. They want their puppies to go to the best possible homes and for the puppy/owner relationship to be a long and happy one. When you visit the breeder's home or kennel, it should be clean and the animals should be properly cared for.

Remember that an "AKC" registration does not in any way guarantee the quality of the dog. It merely means that the puppy comes from registered parents. A common question is "What price can I expect to pay for a Golden Retriever?" Your initial purchase price is only a small fraction of what you will spend over the lifetime of the dog for proper care, grooming, feeding and veterinary services. You can expect to pay a minimum of \$800 for a puppy from a reputable breeder in this area. Certainly the price varies based on the breeder's professional involvement in dog events, and their perception of the quality of their animals. While you can expect to get what you pay for, the most expensive is not necessarily the best either. Please do not ask breeders to comment on another person's dogs or practices. Do not be surprised if the breeder sells a pet puppy on a "limited registration". This means your puppy can be registered with the American Kennel Club and you can participate in performance events, however, you cannot register any offspring should your dog accidentally or otherwise be bred. Pet puppies should be spayed or neutered and the limited registration is one way to help ensure that they don't contribute to overpopulation of the breed.

Puppies should not leave the litter until they are at least seven weeks of age. The breeder should provide you with the registration slip, which you need to complete and mail in to the AKC. You should also receive a copy of any contracts, written guarantees, the pedigree, instructions of care and feeding, and a health history (vaccinations and wormings). Most breeders like to keep in touch with puppy buyers and appreciate when you take the time to send pictures, or ask them questions.

## GENERAL COMMENTS

Goldens are an active breed and require a good deal of attention and exercise. Turning your dog loose in a fenced yard does not guarantee that it will receive adequate exercise to burn off energy. Most Goldens enjoy chasing objects so retrieving is a great backyard activity for you and your dog to interact. Swimming is also a good activity if you are fortunate enough to have water nearby. Goldens should never be allowed to run loose, nor should they be tied out. If you cannot devote the proper amount of time, attention, and exercise to your dog, you should NOT own a golden!

Whether it is a Golden Retriever, or any other breed, your initial investment is the least amount of money you will spend on your dog. The "bargain" usually ends up costing you more in the long run in terms of expensive veterinary care and treatment for diseases common in poorly bred dogs. Consider your purchase as a long-term investment. Your dog will likely be a member of your family for 10-14 years. Taking the time now to make a wise decision will produce a more satisfying result in the long run. Be forewarned-a litter of puppies is most appealing! The Golden Retriever is not for everyone. One should consider everything that is written here. Ask your local bookseller to acquire, or borrow the following two books from the library: **THE WORLD OF THE GOLDEN RETRIEVER** by Nona Kilgore Bauer, and **THE NEW GOLDEN RETRIEVER** by Marcia Schlehr.

After selecting and purchasing a puppy or older dog, it is strongly suggested that you attend some form of obedience classes. These classes will teach you to deal with the everyday behaviors of your new pet, and to socialize them properly. Puppy and "Canine Good Citizen" classes are offered by a number of clubs in the area. You can contact the below listed clubs to see when their training sessions are held, and when you can visit them to observe their training methods. Cost and length of sessions vary.

This pamphlet is provided by the **Badger Golden Retriever Club** of Wisconsin, Inc. through which information and assistance are available. Please feel free to call us with your questions and concerns. Guests are always welcome to attend our meetings, and events. We have programs of general interest, a specialty show, obedience trial, fun matches, seminars, and hunting retriever tests. We want you to select a dog that will grow to meet reasonable expectations of good health, companionship, trainability, and pleasant appearance. Persons interested in becoming a member of the club should contact **BGRC** at 414-299-0787 or visit our website at [www.bgrc-wi.org](http://www.bgrc-wi.org). Persons interested in Golden Retriever Rescue should contact Golden Retriever Rescue of Wisconsin (GRROW) at [www.grrow.org](http://www.grrow.org)

## AREA DOG TRAINING CLUBS

Cudahy Kennel Club, Cudahy, WI 414-769-0758  
Greater Racine Kennel Club, Hy G, Racine, WI  
K-9 Obedience Training Club, Menomonee Falls, WI 262-463-1030  
Milwaukee Dog Training Club, Milwaukee, WI 414-961-6163  
Sheboygan Dog Training Club, Sheboygan, WI 920-452-8788  
Western Waukesha County Dog Training Club, Ixonia, WI 920-206-9311