

# BREED COLUMNS

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## SPORTING GROUP



Sign at the Gila Wilderness; the Leopold family in Wisconsin; Gus with a tame crow



—Patte Titus, [chexsix@mac.com](mailto:chexsix@mac.com)  
German Shorthaired Pointer Club of America

### Curly-Coated Retrievers

Jenny Dickinson, my able assistant, this month shares with us some of her new Curly-Coated Retriever's puppy antics: Breed differences can be subtle but powerful, and the differences that puppies display can leave a first time Curly owner bewildered.

#### THEY ARE RESOURCEFUL!

We take pride in our breed standard's description of our dogs as "wickedly smart."

Our puppies are different from other retriever puppies in that their energies are not demonstrated as overtly as we see in Golden or Labrador puppies, whose exuberance and bouncy cheerfulness are impossible to miss. From an early age, Curly puppies problem-solve. Their energies are devoted to strategies. For the obedience trainer, this is a fabulous trait: My 5-month-old puppy is already doing scent articles. For the pet owner, however, this can be exasperating and may lead to the puppy being constantly punished or even given up.

I want to talk about what to expect from a Curly puppy and how to value rather than worry over his resourcefulness. I am now on my ninth Curly, but I continue to be surprised

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Curly-Coated Retriever

by his antics. I call them “antics,” but if I did not know the breed, I would be panicking about them. We all know that at 4 months, most puppies decide that they do not have to listen to us anymore. This is developmental, and it corresponds to the wolf pup’s ability at that age to leave the group for short excursions.

I am glad that my puppy is not a worrier—that he does not fret when he is told to stop jumping on the counter. To him, no shelf is too high, no counter too deep. This can, of course, be dangerous for the pup. He likes to grab knives out of the sink, for example. My first Curly did exactly the same thing and walked around the house like a pirate. All this means is that I have to work

harder on counter-surfing and jumping up. It is not the dog’s fault that he is curious.

At 4½ months, Henley decided that a baby gate is just a speed bump. It may take more than one try, but there is no baby gate that he cannot jump over. This persistence reminds me again of my first Curly, Henry, who would work to open a gate, no matter how long that it took. All my gates now have heavy chains securing them.

*Persistence* is the hallmark of the Curly-Coated Retriever. A Spinone Italiano owner friend of mine told me that a Curly is sent out at the end of her field-training sessions to search out any birds that may have been left behind by other dogs who gave up on finding their quarry. The Curly gladly performs cleanup. It is precisely the kind of challenge he embraces with satisfaction.—J.D.

Jenny, thanks so much for such a charming column. Also, in England, during the big hunting events with retrievers, the Curly was known as the “pickup dog” who did indeed find the birds that other retriever breeds may have missed.

A quick reminder to Curly owners: Our Curly field event workshop is planned for May 27–29, in Tennessee. Please go to <http://www.cerca.org> for complete information.

—Ann Shinkle,  
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## Golden Retrievers

### A BRIGHT LIGHT IN A BAD YEAR

The year 2020 was one of bad news and gloomy prospects for most Americans. I, for one, often turned to my sweet Golden (a rescue) and rowdy Labrador for smiles and comfort.

I was also cheered at some good news from the University of Missouri (MU): progress in the war on canine cancer. MU College of Veterinary Medicine oncology professors Jeffrey Bryan, DVM, MS, PhD., DACVIM, and Brian Flesner, DVM, MS, DACVIM, have been working to create a vaccine to treat canine bone cancer (osteosarcoma). Osteosarcoma is one of the five primary cancers affecting canines, and it is the most common bone tumor cancer in dogs. It affects predominantly large breeds (which includes Golden Retrievers) and giant breeds, with 8,000 to 10,000 cases diagnosed each year.

While the tumors can occur in any bone, they most commonly occur on the dog’s leg, frequently a front leg, causing swelling and lameness from the pain. Unfortunately, amputation is usually necessary.

During their research, Dr. Flesner and Dr. Bryan partnered with Elias Animal Health Labs to create a vaccine using cancer cells from the tumor on the affected limb. Following amputation of that limb, the

