

What Exactly Is An “ENGLISH” Golden Retriever?

by Bev Brown

This article was reviewed by the Editorial Review Board

It seems to have become the custom for people in North America to describe as “English” any Golden Retriever that *looks like* the Goldens bred overseas, when in fact the dog might have been bred in Scotland, Holland, Norway, Australia, Canada or even the United States, and not England at all.

All Goldens descend from the same foundations that originated in Scotland in 1868 and were further developed throughout the United Kingdom (UK). However, in the United States and parts of Canada, the breed has developed a somewhat different look than it did overseas.

To try and answer “What Exactly Is an English Golden Retriever?” let’s look at the following questions:

1. What do people really mean when they refer to an “English” Golden Retriever?
2. How do they differ from Goldens from American lines?
3. How do the Goldens in Canada fit into this?
4. How did this all come about?

In order to answer all of the above, we need to start with a few explanations and some historical background. Let’s begin by defining “parent club” and “breed standard.”

Parent Club

A group of dog fanciers of one specific breed coming together to form a national organization for the preservation and advancement of that specific breed is known as that breed’s “parent club.” A parent club must be recognized and approved by the dog regulatory or registering body in that country as the one official authoritative organization for that breed in that country. Parent clubs often have local or regional chapter clubs as members, as well as individuals who often belong to both the parent club and their local club. Most parent clubs are initially responsible for preparing the official “breed standard” for approval by the governing body.

Breed Standard

A “breed standard” is the official written description of the ideal specimen of that breed. The standard is intended to guide breeders toward maintaining the breed’s quality



and to guide judges in evaluating dogs in the show ring. Although the parent clubs are the authors of the individual breed standards, the governing body is normally the actual owner of them.

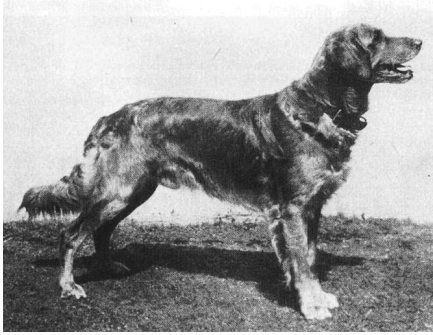
The Early Years in North America

The Golden Retriever breed was first recognized by the Canadian Kennel Club (CKC) in 1927. In 1928, Foxbury Peter, owned by Mrs. Alex Maclaren, became the first Golden Retriever to become a Canadian Champion. Significant early kennels were the Gilnockie Kennel in Winnipeg, Manitoba, owned by Mr. Bart Armstrong, and the Rockhaven Kennel in North Vancouver, British Columbia, owned by Col. Sam Magoffin and home to Can-Am CH. Speedwell Pluto. Imported from England at 15 months of age in 1930, Pluto became a Canadian Champion in 1931 and the first American Champion Golden Retriever in 1932. Then in 1933, he became the first Golden Retriever to receive Best in Show honors in the U.S. Upon the death of Bart Armstrong, Col. Magoffin acquired the Gilnockie Kennel and transferred it to Englewood, Colorado. Pluto, along with the Rockhaven and Gilnockie dogs, were a major part of the foundation for the breed in both Canada and the United States.

The first organized Golden Retriever club in Canada was the Golden Retriever Club of Ontario, which was established in 1958. By 1960, this club became the Golden Retriever Club of Canada (GRCC) and was designated as the parent club for the breed with CKC.

The American Kennel Club (AKC) officially recognized Golden Retrievers in 1932. Goldens imported from the historical English kennels of Anningsley, Speedwell, Stubbings, Ottershaw, Wilderness, Donkelve, Woolley, Aldgrove, Haulstone, Dewstraw, Yelme, and Elsville, combined with the Rockhaven and Gilnockie dogs, gave a broad base of bloodlines of similar “type” (overall look) for further development of the breed in the U.S. in the 1920s and 30s. By 1938, there were enough Golden Retrievers and Golden Retriever fanciers in the U.S. to merit the establishment of the Golden Retriever Club of America (GRCA), which became the official parent club for Goldens with AKC.

Early Golden in the UK:



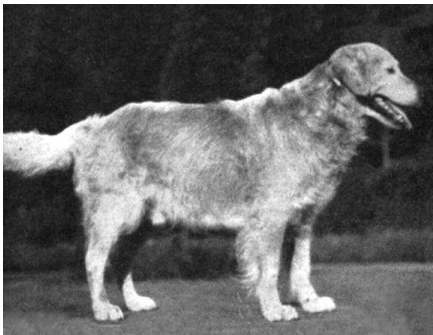
CH. Heydown Gunner (1921)



CH. Rip of Kentford (1923)



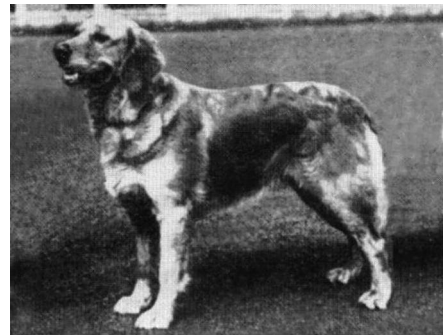
CH. Bruce of Dewstraw (1925)



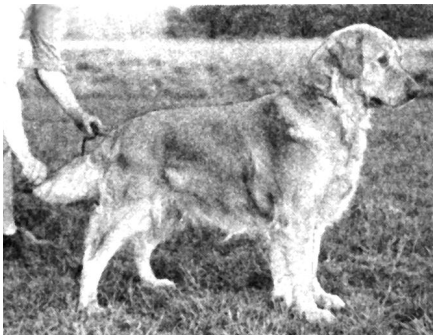
Gilder (1929) Sire of 8 champions



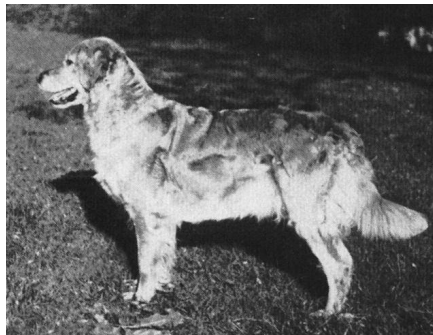
Field CH. Avishays Brush (1933)



Dual CH. Noranby Destiny (1943)



CH. Alexander of Elsiville (1944)

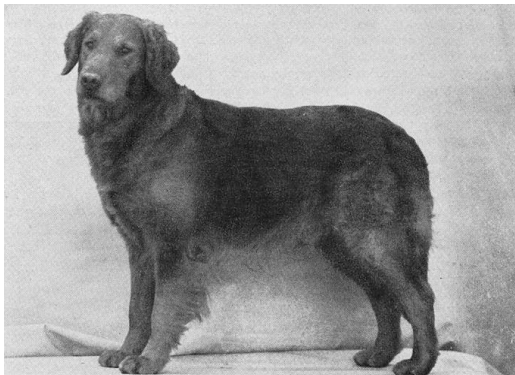


CH. Susan of Westley (1945)



CH. Dearnar of Yelme (1947)

Early Golden in Canada:



Am-Can CH. Speedwell Pluto (1928) UK Import. First GRCC Outstanding Sire, producing 10 Canadian Champions; and first GRCA Outstanding Sire, producing four American Champions.



From the Rockhaven Kennel, Vancouver, BC, in 1938: L-R, Canadian Champions Rockhaven Lempi, Lassie, Harold, (also American Champion), Amber, and Maihi; Am-Can CH. Speedwell Pluto (UK import); and Am-Can CH. Wilderness Tangerine (UK import).

What Exactly Is An "English" Golden Retriever, *continued*



The breed standard adopted by GRCA and GRCC was essentially the same as the British Standard, and the breed in the 1930s and 1940s in the U.S., Canada, and the UK looked quite similar and shared many close relatives. To follow are some examples of early Golden Retrievers in the UK, Canada, and the US, with the dog's year of birth in parenthesis.

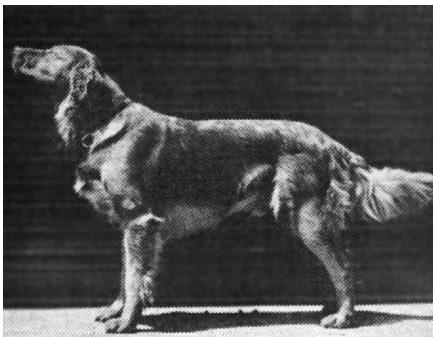
Then along came World War II (1939-1945) with food, gasoline, and tire rationing. The war had a very negative impact on dog breeding and dog shows. Championship dog shows were suspended in Great Britain, and dog shows were severely curtailed in North America. Just keeping the bloodlines going was difficult for all.

FC-AFC and Can. Dual CH. Rockhaven Raynard of Fo-Go-Ta (1948). He was the first Canadian Dual Champion, bred in Canada by Cyril Stone and owned by Col. Sam Magoffin of the Rockhaven Kennel in Vancouver, BC. Later owned by Torch Flinn of Tigathoe Kennels, Greenwich, CT, where he completed his American FC-AFC and qualified for the GRCA Field Dog Hall of Fame.

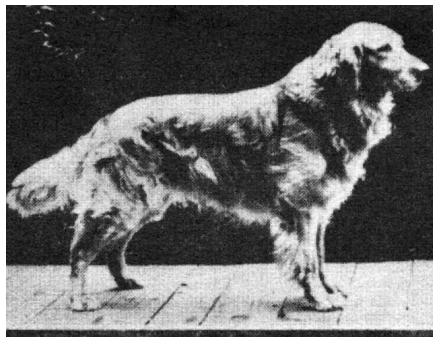
Post World War II

As things slowly returned to normal after the war, importing of Golden Retrievers from the UK to North America resumed. Dogs from the English kennels of Dewstraw, Elsilville, Yeo, Oakwin, Rosecott,

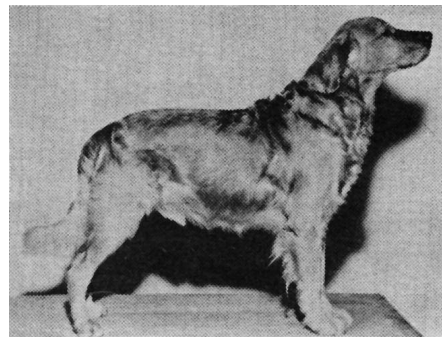
Early Golden Retrievers in the U.S.:



CH. Rockhaven Moonshine (1932)



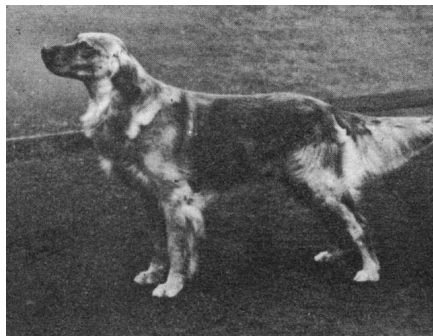
CH. Twin Hill Missy's Boy (1939)



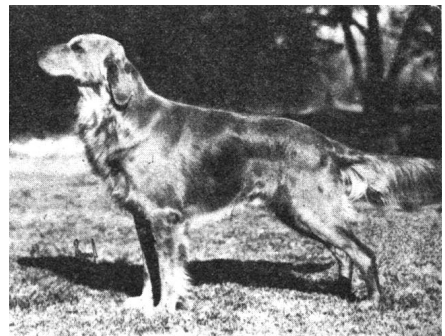
CH. Kettle River Cossack (1942)



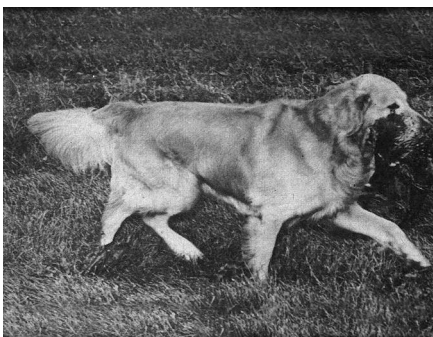
CH. Czar of Wildwood (1944)



CH. Squawkie Hill Highlight (1946)



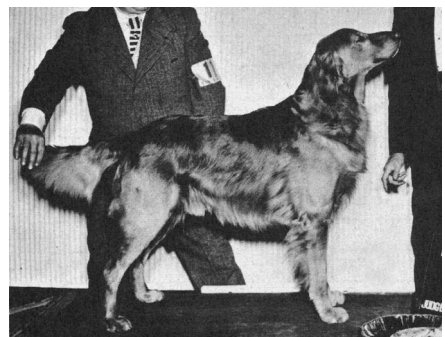
CH. Prince Copper of Malibu (1948)



CH. Squawkie Hill Dapper Dexter (1948)



CH. AFC Lorelei's Golden Rockbottom UD (1948)



CH. Golden Knoll's King Alphonzo (1949)

Westley, Camrose, Holway, Alresford, Boltby, Drexholme, and Janville were brought over, making a broader base of bloodlines available. However, by the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, the emergence of different influential sires and dams in the U.S., Canada, and the UK helped bring about a more noticeable divergence of type of the typical specimen in each country.

As time went by, the breed standards in the U.S., Canada, and the UK were modified independently, which may have further promoted a divergence in type. However, it's not that the revised standards called for different qualities. The differences in type that began to develop between the U.S. and the UK are more likely a result of the more closed gene pools separated by the Atlantic Ocean and the volume of quality dogs in the U.S. after the war. In Eastern Canada, where a more British type of Golden already existed, a preference for that type probably inspired more importation from the UK and judicious use of those dogs.

As the breed became more popular and more successful in American dog shows in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, trends developed and popular sires emerged that descended from the American dogs of the 1950s and '60s and resembled them in general type. No doubt assisted by the improvements in animal air shipping and the advent of frozen semen and fresh chilled semen, stud dogs from successful American lines were used in a wide variety of different breeding programs across America. As these dogs dominated the American show rings, there was less and less interest in importing dogs. The various American bloodlines, with a variety of type, were firmly established. Still, some interest remained in the dogs in the UK in the 1970s and '80s and significant imports were successfully incorporated into the bloodlines of the Gayhaven, Kyrie, Beckwith, Malagold, Starfarm, Liberator, Cal-Vo, Beaumaris, Morningsage, Synergold, Hunts, Braeside, and Trowsnest kennels. Probably due in part to this influence, a nice variety of type could be seen in Goldens in the U.S. Much the same was happening in the UK in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, with outstanding dogs of their day having a strong influence and helping to further set the type there.

The American bloodlines were also very popular in Western and Central Canada, which gave a more uniform look to the breed in much of North America. However, dogs imported from overseas were used more extensively by breeders in Eastern Canada, and their influence could easily be seen there in the 1970s, '80s and '90s.

Goldens have also been exported from the UK to other countries all over the world, most significantly to Europe and Australia, where the British Breed Standard was maintained. These countries tended to import more frequently from the UK in the post World War II era than did fanciers in the U.S., and the imported dogs were often used more extensively. Since the Goldens living in these countries were already of similar overall type as the British dogs, additional imported dogs were easily incorporated into many existing breeding programs, and the type and trends continued generally to follow the UK.

Overview of the Breed Today

The perception among many of today's American Golden Retriever breeders is that the “English type” Goldens are very different from the American Goldens. And if they see an “English type” Golden that is extremely light in color, an American fancier may assume that the color alone eliminates it from consideration in the American show ring. They are unable to appreciate anything else about the dog. Yet, in most of the rest of the world, these light shades are well accepted. Extremes in color do not distract judges and fanciers there from evaluating the many critical parts of the rest of the dog – such as structure, overall balance, soundness, head and expression, pigmentation, coat texture, temperament, and so on. Outstanding examples of American Goldens and outstanding Goldens from overseas are not so terribly different from each other, and carefully combining the types/bloodlines often blurs even the most noticeable of differences, including the blending of color. The basic structure, head properties, movement, soundness and temperament called for in the two standards are quite compatible. Variations in type can occur even among littermates, and selection greatly impacts the next generation.

A breeder's vision and how they interpret the breed standard in their country, combined with the type of Golden they are used to seeing, can greatly influence their selections, both in the stud dogs they use and which offspring they keep for future breeding.



(UK) CH. & Irish CH. Linirgor Ever Hopeful JW (2001). “Hope” is a full champion, having also qualified in the field, and is the all-time top winning Golden Retriever bitch in Scotland, having earned 16 Challenge Certificates (CCs) to date. Hope is bred and owned by Linsey and Irene Dumbar (Linirgor), Stirlingshire, Scotland.

Popular sires and dams can establish a different look in a region, particularly when separated from another region by a vast ocean. Also, a quarantine in one region encourages movement of breeding stock in one direction only. Although the American and British Goldens are a good example of this situation, both are Golden Retrievers through and through and descend from the same foundations.

What Exactly Is An “English” Golden Retriever, *continued*

In Great Britain, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, the breed appears generally to be a heavier dog with a flatter croup; broader skull; a deeper, wider muzzle; and with more wavy coats seen. Many Golden Retrievers overseas fit this description, however, there are variations in type among them.



(UK) SH. CH. *Gatchells Royal Orchid JW* (1998). The JW suffix stands for Junior Warrant, which is earned for competitive class wins between 6 and 18 months of age. “Mia” is the dam of champions in the UK, Sweden, and Belgium. She is owned by her breeders, Yvette and Dave Mannings (*Gatchells*), Somerset, England.

The breed in the U.S. today has a variety of types, but is generally a less angulated and somewhat lighter weight dog, with a straighter and more profuse coat than its British cousin. Many North American fanciers feel that the overseas bloodlines excel in head properties, balance, and fore-quarter structure; while the American bloodlines tend to excel in rear quarters, movement, and showmanship.



(U.S.) CH. *Summits MR. Bojangles, OS, SDHF* (1998). A winner of 10 Best in Show awards, “Hobo” is also a 3-time winner of Best of Breed at the GRCA National Specialty (2003, 2004 and 2006), a member of the GRCA Show Dog Hall of Fame, and a GRCA Outstanding Sire. Hobo is owned by Susan Lusa (*Gracious Golden*), Rev. Alan R. Klessig, and his breeder/handler, Beth Johnson (*Summit*).

The Western and Midwestern Canadian Golden Retrievers still show significant influence from the American lines. The Eastern provinces continue to reflect the influence of the early UK imports, and the many important additions from overseas that followed.

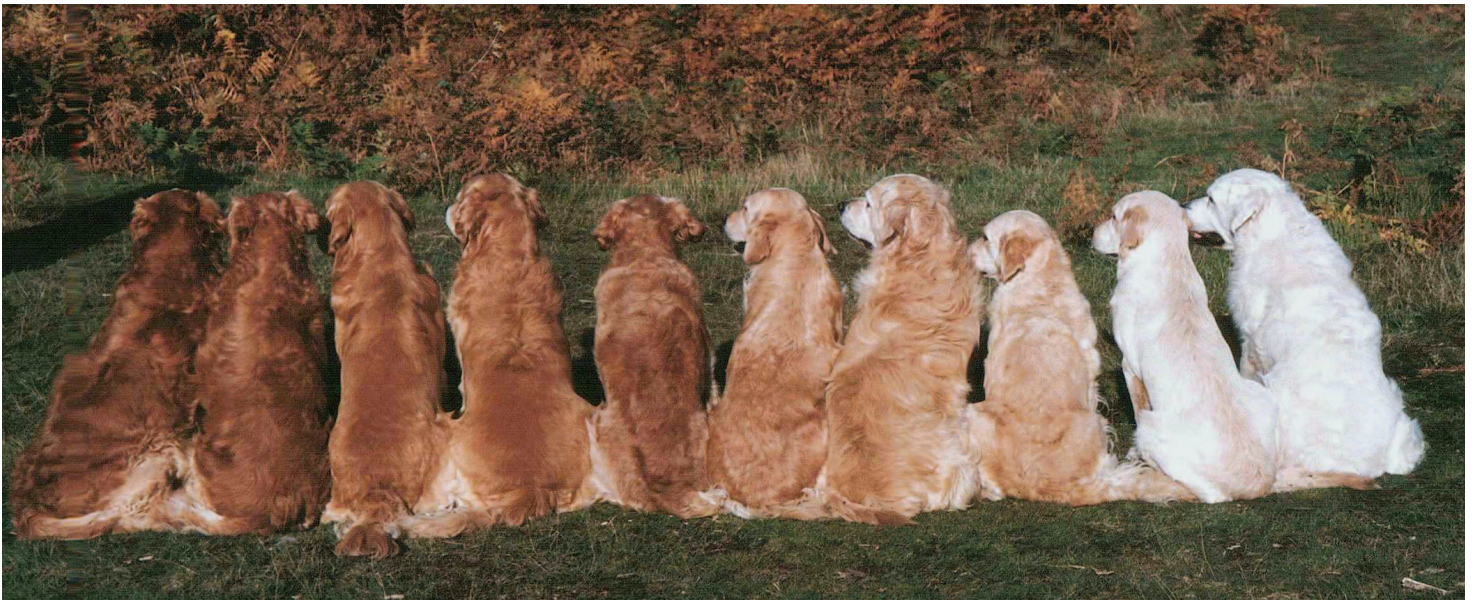
Why “English” instead of UK or British?

Another question that occasionally comes up is why do people say “English type” Golden Retrievers instead of “UK type” or “British type?” The truth is that some fanciers do say “British type,” but many people have become accustomed to using the word “English” to describe the type of Golden Retrievers bred overseas, or bred in North America from recent imports. The large 1968 GRCA Yearbook includes a listing of conformation titled Golden Retrievers from Great Britain, from the first one in 1914 through those in 1966, and refers to them as English Champions. But England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have officially been the “United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland” (UK) since 1800, so why don’t we refer to them as UK Champions or British Champions? The likely answer is that, in the early days, the dog shows in the UK were all held in England, and their kennel club and Golden Retriever parent club (called simply “The Kennel Club” and “The Golden Retriever Club”) were situated in England. The championship system used in England ultimately became the system used throughout Great Britain, but in the meantime the custom of calling them English Champions developed here and seems to have stuck. (In the UK, they simply call them champions!) The breed standard was developed by the (UK) Golden Retriever Club, situated in England, and thus it would have been the “English” Breed Standard to us in the early days. Today it would be equally correct, or more so, to refer to their champions, type, and breed standard as UK or British, but the terms English Champion, English type, and English Breed Standard are deeply entrenched in our conversation, books, documents, and k9data.com (an online Golden Retriever pedigree database). This may also be why many people in North America call the dogs bred around the world – with a similar look, similar bloodlines, and bred to that same breed standard – as “English.” However, the people in those other countries simply call them “Golden Retrievers,” or specify them by the country in which they were bred, not by how they look. To them, the type (or look) and bloodlines that are “different” are the American Golden Retrievers.

About Color

The British Breed Standard

There tend to be more Golden Retrievers in the lighter shades of gold overseas than seen in the U.S., including those through a very light shade known as “cream.” In fact, the British Standard specifies cream as an allowable shade. However, Golden Retrievers still display the full range of color in the UK, as shown in the photograph on the next page of 10 Golden Retrievers bred and owned by Wendy Andrews, Catcombe Golden Retrievers, Wiltshire, England:



*This photo is a vivid example of the range of color in the British Breed Standard. It is from the book *The Golden Retriever Breed Standard Illustrated*, courtesy of the author, Wendy Andrews, Catcombe Golden Retrievers, Wiltshire, England.*

The exact wording from the British Standard is
Any shade of gold or cream, neither red nor mahogany. A few white hairs on chest only permissible.

The American Breed Standard

Although there is a wide range of shades of gold in the U.S. conformation lines, from a rich, dark gold to quite light, the majority are in the mid-gold range. The American Standard considers undesirable a predominant body color that is extremely pale or extremely dark. These extremes are less than the ideal, but not disqualifications, and their seriousness should be weighed against the dog's virtues and the faults and virtues of the other dogs present in the ring. Theoretically, if you have two Goldens of equal overall quality in competition, and one is extremely pale or extremely dark, the dog that is somewhere within the allowable range of color should receive the higher award. The allowable spectrum is really quite broad, and only dogs described as cream or dark red should be faulted. Also, other than the undesirable extremes at both ends of the spectrum, there is no preference for one shade of gold over another. Unfortunately, some judges seem to lack sufficient knowledge in this area and tend to improperly penalize dogs that aren't medium gold. Some judges may even be uncomfortable with light colored feathering, but this is described in the Standard and is an attractive part of the Golden's appearance.

The exact wording from the American Standard is:

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.

The Canadian Breed Standard

The Canadian Standard allows for all shades of lustrous gold. Although the color cream is not specifically discussed, it seems to be well accepted there, and cream dogs of good quality can excel in the show ring, particularly in the Eastern provinces. The Canadian Breed Standard addresses color as follows:

Colour lustrous golden of various shades. A few white hairs on chest permissible but not desirable. Further white markings to be faulted except for greying or whitening of the face or body due to age. Any noticeable area of black or other off-colour hair is to be faulted.

However, most knowledgeable Golden Retriever fanciers know that “It's not all about color.” The breed came to prominence first and foremost because of its disposition and worth as a gun dog and family dog. Soundness of mind and body, and being a credit to its heritage, are of far more importance than the shade of gold. Although people may have their personal preferences, color is not something that should be overemphasized. However, it behooves breeders to remember that the breed was founded as a gold-colored retriever, hence the name Golden Retriever, and maintaining some golden coloring in the breed's coat color is worthwhile, regardless of where it is in the world.

The English Background Goldens in North America Website

There are many fanciers in North America who have a great appreciation for the type of Golden most commonly seen today in Great Britain, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Imports from overseas to the U.S. and Canada have increased in the last 10 years. Many American and Canadian fanciers have joined forces via the Internet through the English Background Goldens in North America (EGNA) website to provide the public with information about Golden Retrievers in general and this “English” persuasion in particular. Many of these North American breeders “blend” the overseas pedigrees with their own North American lines to produce a lovely “blended type” that takes advantage of the different virtues of each and also improves their genetic diversity. The litters and stud dogs seen on the EGNA website should represent pedigrees that are at least 50 percent overseas bloodlines.

In conclusion, the word “English” is often used in North America to describe a general type of Golden Retriever currently popular in Great Britain, and which is also well established in Europe, Australia and New Zealand, where Goldens are largely based on dogs from Great Britain. The term might be used when the specific country in which it was bred was not referenced or not known, thus really meaning that the dog is of “English type.” However, as mentioned above, it would be equally correct, or more so, to say the dog is of “British type.” And it might not be a dog from overseas, but rather one that was bred in North America from modern day imported dogs, imported frozen semen, or recent descendants thereof, thus generally maintaining the post-war British type and background. The expressions “English Golden,” “English type,” and “English Champion,” rightly or wrongly, are commonly used in North America. However, customs can change, and expressions such as “British type,” “British Champion,” and “UK Champion” may be heard more in the future. ❖

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And please remember...

- Although some people refer to pale-colored Goldens as white, they are merely a very light version of the breed’s normal yellow color range.
- Just because a dog is cream or very light doesn’t mean that it’s rare or more valuable.
- It’s not true that all overseas Goldens are cream. There are some excellent specimens abroad that are decidedly gold in color:



(UK) CH. Catcombe Corblimey JW. Pup of the Year in the UK in 2003. Show Gundog Working Certificate and 9 CCs to date. Top winning Golden Retriever in the UK in 2007. Bred and owned by Wendy Andrews (Catcombe).



(Sweden) Multi CH. Dewmist Silkventure. Group and Best in Show winner. Bred by Henric Fryckstrand (Dewmist). Owned by Henric Fryckstrand and Kerstin Eklund (Silkventure).

- Just because a dog is cream or very light, doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s from modern day British lines:



(US) CH. Happy HR Malagold Dust Storm (1999). Bred by Maura Phelan (Happy Hour) and owned by Teri Kocher (Tango).



(US) CH. Laurell’s Hooked On Clasix (2002). Bred by Tom and Laura Kling (Laurell) and owned by Jean Ettinger (Jett’s).

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