

# Noncompetitive Conformation Assessment Program

## Overview of Program

The GRCA offers a Noncompetitive Conformation Assessment Program for Golden Retrievers at which a Certificate of Conformation Assessment (CCA) may be earned. This is open to all Golden Retrievers over the age of 18 months that are AKC or CKC registered, or which have an AKC ILP number. Spayed and neutered animals are expressly permitted to participate, as are dogs owned by non-members of GRCA

## General Purposes of Program

The purposes of the CCA program are to (a) provide a non-competitive means of evaluating and scoring the conformation qualities of individual Golden Retrievers against the Breed Standard (as opposed to a competitive “dog-to-dog” comparison as in dog show competition); (b) provide a useful and informative assessment by knowledgeable evaluators of the conformation qualities of individual Golden Retrievers, with written records of reports on Golden Retrievers which have been assessed as reaching a certain level of quality according to the AKC Breed Standard.

Recognition will be based on achievement of three qualifying scores of 75 or greater (out of a possible 100) for a CCA (Certificate of Conformation Assessment) or three qualifying scores of 65 or greater for an Honorable Mention, as assessed by three different evaluators. It is expected that many dogs that may never enter in formal conformation competition would qualify for either a CCA or an Honorable Mention, under the program. There are additional requirements as to minimum scores (explained under Scoring), and the number of attempts to qualify will be limited to six evaluations.

## Means of Offering Program

The GRCA, and any GRCA-recognized Golden Retriever Specialty club, upon application to the CCA Committee and approval by same, may sponsor a CCA event. The event may be held independently or in conjunction with a Golden Retriever specialty show, a hunting test, field trial, WC/WCX test, obedience trial, agility trial, local club event, or any combination of these. All National and Regional Specialties are strongly encouraged to offer a CCA Event.

## Awarding of Certificate

Dogs that receive the required qualifying scores of 75 or above from three different evaluators will receive a “Certificate of Conformation Assessment” which will be a GRCA recognized title. Dogs receiving three scores of 65 or above from three different evaluators may qualify for an Honorable Mention, although an Honorable Mention will not be an officially recognized GRCA title.

## GRCA Committee

A small standing committee shall serve as the GRCA CCA Committee. It will:

1. Receive and approve applications and dates for CCA events.

2. Maintain a record of dogs that participate and are evaluated, and award certificates to those qualifying for a CCA.
3. Provide host clubs with copies of the regulations, guidelines, entry forms, applications, score sheets and other information as may be needed to hold a CCA event.
4. Receive and approve applications from prospective evaluators, and maintain a database of approved evaluators and their assignments.

The committee will also develop and supply forms for the CCA event application, evaluator approval applications, entry forms, score sheets and evaluation forms, agreement to publish scores and/or evaluations on individual dogs, and others as may be necessary.

The Committee shall designate a Coordinator and a Recorder. The Coordinator shall mail and receive event applications and evaluator applications, keep a calendar of CCA events, and archive all documents received, as well as whatever other duties the Committee may assign. The Recorder shall maintain databases of approved evaluators and their pertinent information, dogs that have participated in the program, and shall be responsible for mailing certificates for dogs which have completed the requirements.

## GENERAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### 1. Host Club Application

Each club desiring to hold a CCA event shall apply to the GRCA CCA Committee no later than 60 days prior to the scheduled event. An application form as developed by the CCA Committee shall be used. Each application shall include the date, place, and time of the event, the names of the evaluators, entry fees to be charged, any entry limits and method of handling them, name and address of the Event Secretary to whom entries are to be sent, and the names of the event committee people and chairperson. The host club shall appoint a CCA event committee of no less than three members, of which one shall serve as chairperson, and one shall serve as Event Secretary. At least two of the committee members must be members of the GRCA.

### 2. Evaluators – Number and Qualifications

The number of evaluators at each event may vary from one to three, keeping in mind that a minimum of three qualifying scores by three different evaluators, two of whom must be from Category 1, are required in order for a dog to earn a Certificate.

- If one evaluator is used he/she must be Category 1.
- If two evaluators are used at least one must be from Category 1.
- If three evaluators are used at least two must be from Category 1

It is recommended that a CCA Event include three evaluators whenever possible.

Evaluators shall be classified into two categories: Category I evaluators must be approved AKC or CKC judges in good standing, are Golden breeders and/or have had at least two years of experience in judging Golden Retrievers.

Category II evaluators must meet the following criteria: A breeder and owner of Golden Retrievers with ten years experience in Golden Retrievers; has bred at least three Golden Retriever litters; has owned at least five different Golden Retrievers with any of the following titles: (a) AKC champion; (b) AKC UD or TDX; (c) AKC MH, SH, or GRCA \*\*\* or \*\* ; (d) AKC AX or AXJ. Copies of AKC or GRCA records (GRCA Yearbook data is acceptable) indicating the required qualifications must be submitted with the application, if requested by the Committee, unless the person is already on the CCA approved list.

Evaluators must be a member in good standing of GRCA, or, if a resident of Canada, of the Golden Retriever Club of Canada, for five consecutive years including the current year and the four immediately previous. Additional relevant experience, such as having judged Golden Retriever sweepstakes or conformation matches, or handled dogs to titles for others, should also be included with the application.

Of the three evaluators at a CCA event, two must be Category I evaluators. The third may be either a Category I or a Category II evaluator.

The GRCA CCA Committee will keep a list of names and addresses of all approved evaluators, and will provide a copy of such list to any host club requesting same. The evaluators shall receive in advance of the event, a copy of the regulations, guidelines for evaluators, and sample score sheets/evaluation forms.

All evaluators must have an understanding of retrievers and sporting dogs, including the purpose and function of the Golden Retriever. Evaluators must also be familiar with the process of evaluating dogs against the breed standard, rather than simply comparing dogs to each other, and must be willing to provide a written assessment of the qualities of each dog evaluated, using the score sheets provided, and abiding by the regulations and guidelines. Evaluators must also be willing to provide a brief verbal critique of dogs evaluated, if that is requested by the host club.

### **3. Advertising and Call for Entries**

The offering of a CCA event may be publicized by the host club in any reasonable manner. The Call for Entries shall state the name of the host club, the date, place, and time of the event, the names and addresses of the evaluators, entry fees, closing date for entries and any entry limits, name and address of the Event Secretary to whom entries are to be sent, the names of the event committee members and the chairperson, names of the officers of the host club, and other information as may be relevant.

### **4. Limitation of Entries**

Host clubs may choose to limit the number of entries in the event. It is strongly recommended that entry limits be considered, and that this should be based on a limit of no more than 3 dogs per hour and a maximum of 24 per event. Clubs should permit adequate time for the examinations, evaluators' completion of all score sheets and written evaluations, and discussions after the completion of the evaluations. Any limit on number of entries, and the method of handling limits, shall be noted on the application to the GRCA CCA committee and

published in the Call for Entries. If entries are to be limited, clubs may (a) accept entries in the order received, in which case time and date for the opening and for the closing of entries must be published in the Call for Entries. No entries may be accepted prior to the stated time and date of the opening; any entries received prior to such time and date must be returned.

OR (b) accept entries until the closing date and time, when a drawing will be held to determine acceptance. An alternate list may be used, as in Tracking Tests, if the host club chooses.

After the advertised closing date and time, no entries may be accepted, except that if the entry limit has not been met, the club may choose to accept additional entries on the day of the event. If there are more late applicants than there are vacancies, a drawing will be held among them to select the additional dogs to be evaluated in addition to those previously entered.

### **5. Entry Fees**

Host clubs may set and charge reasonable fees for entries in the CCA event, and these must be published in the Call for Entries. Invalid entries and "bounced" checks may result in invalidation of evaluations and scores.

### **6. Qualifying Scores and Awards**

In order to obtain the CCA and title, a Golden must obtain a score of 75 or greater from each of three different evaluators, not necessarily at the same event; at least two of those evaluators must be from Category I. In order to obtain an Honorable Mention, a Golden must obtain a score of 65 or greater from each of three different evaluators, regardless of category. A separate Honorable Mention will not be issued to Golden's which qualify for the CCA.

In addition to a total score of 75 (or 65, for Honorable Mention) out of the maximum 100 points, in order to qualify the dog must (a) have no disqualifying faults under the Breed Standard or AKC rules; (b) not be disqualified, dismissed, or failed in Temperament; (c) not score 0 – 2 in any category; (d) not have scores of 0 – 4 in any two categories.

### **Awards and Ribbons**

The GRCA will supply the following to the host club:

- "Congratulations Cards" for those dogs *completing a CCA*. This card will state that the CCA Certificate will be mailed to the owner of the dog.
- "Congratulations Cards" for those dogs earning an Honorable Mention. There is no certificate for Honorable Mention.
- Ribbons/rosettes are the responsibility of the host club, and are to be given to all dogs participating in the event. They are to be at least 2" by 8" in size with the following colors and wording:
- Completion of CCA title -- gold rosette imprinted "Completion of Certificate"
- Qualifying score for CCA -- gold ribbon imprinted "Qualifying Score"
- Qualifying score for Honorable Mention -- dark green ribbon imprinted "Honorable Mention"
- Participant ribbon – (one for each dog participating, regardless of score) – burgundy ribbon imprinted "Participation"

The ribbons and rosettes should be imprinted with the words "GRCA Conformation Assessment", and GRCA club logo. Host clubs may add their own name and logo as well. If the date is not printed on the front of the ribbon or rosette, it should appear on a card attached to the back.

It is recommended that all participants receive a participation ribbon or memento. Ribbons for dogs earning CCA qualifying scores or Honorable Mentions, and rosettes for completion of CCA titles are expected, but there are to be no awards based on ranking of scores (i.e., "highest score" awards).

## **7. What dogs may participate**

Any Golden Retriever over the age of 18 months that is individually registered with either AKC or CKC, and any Golden Retriever with an AKC ILP number may participate. Spayed and neutered dogs may participate. Exhibitors, owners, or handlers who are under suspension by the AKC, the CKC, or the GRCA may not enter dogs owned by them nor handle dogs in the event. Dogs which have been determined to be ineligible under Section 8 (following) may not enter nor participate in CCA events.

All dogs must be permanently identified by tattoo, microchip, or AKC DNA registration. The permanent identification number must appear on the entry form.

## **8. Limitation on number of attempts; Ineligible Dogs**

Dogs which have been evaluated by six evaluators and have not received the three required qualifying scores for a CCA will be declared ineligible for entry in any future CCA events. A "Not Rated" dog is not considered to have been evaluated (see section on Scoring, below).

Dogs which have been found by three evaluators to have any disqualifying fault under the Breed Standard or under AKC rules (except for spayed and neutered dogs) are not eligible for further entry. Any dog that has been disqualified at a CCA event for attacking or attempting to attack a person is no longer eligible to enter or participate in a CCA event. Any dog which has been dismissed twice for attacking another dog, or for menacing or threatening, or because the evaluator feels it may not be safely examined, is no longer eligible to enter or participate in a CCA event. Any ineligible dog that participates in a CCA event shall have its score(s) from such event nullified by the CCA Committee.

## **9. Evaluations**

### **A. Place, Area**

(1) The place for the evaluations may be indoors or outdoors as the host club may designate. It should be an area large enough to permit three evaluators to examine each dog both standing and moving. A formal ring set-up is not required, but a firm surface and suitable footing for the dogs on which to stand and move is required. An area approximately 50 feet square is recommended; larger is acceptable. A small table, and chairs for evaluators and persons acting as stewards, should be provided.

A separate area or areas should be provided for the Event Secretary, and for the measuring (and weighing, if that is done) and photographing.

(2) Measuring and weighing. Clubs must have an AKC approved measuring device available, which shall be adjustable to the nearest quarter inch. Veterinary scales may also be made available at the option of the host club. Measuring and weighing need not be done by the evaluators, but may be done by other designated persons. Each dog presented for evaluation must be measured for height using the measuring device. If the measurement is within one-quarter inch of the limit for disqualification, the measurement must be verified by the Category I evaluators using a wicket or other device as approved by the AKC. It is recommended that all dogs be first measured before evaluation, and any which need to be verified then be measured by the evaluators after the evaluations have taken place and before the final scores are tallied. Heights and weights (if taken) shall be recorded on the score sheets.

(3) Photographing. If possible, each dog should be photographed individually from the front and in profile, in a standing position against a plain background. The assigned (armband) number should be included within the photo for identification. The photographs (in printed form) and a CD of all archival and group photographs should accompany the report to the CCA Committee. Photographing may be done by any person(s) designated by the host club.

An informal group photograph of dogs qualifying for a CCA Certificate is also recommended, to be published in the *Golden Retriever News* with the event report.

(4) Time. Sufficient time should be allotted for careful examination, evaluation, and scoring. Ten to fifteen minutes per dog for this phase is suggested, with additional time for writing of the critiques and other paperwork, as well as verbal discussion with exhibitors. It is recommended that entries be limited to no more than 3 per hour, or 24 maximum, for one event.

## **B. Evaluation**

Dogs should be clean and brushed, but need not be groomed as in showing, nor formally posed. Dogs should be under control at all times, and should accept the evaluators' reasonable examinations. As the evaluations may be held in connection with field events, judges should be prepared to see dogs that are not groomed or handled as in show ring competition. Dogs with evidence of "field wear" are not to be penalized; evaluation of the dog's intrinsic quality according to the AKC Breed Standard is the objective.

Honorable scars and blemishes from work which do not interfere with or obscure the soundness and basic appearance of the dog are not to be considered in evaluation.

Owners are encouraged to present their own dogs, as this program is intended for educational purposes. Professional handlers may present only dogs that they own or co-own. Dogs should be observed at some time during the evaluation in small groups of 3 to 6, in order to observe their behavior and temperament in the company of other dogs and people. Males and females may be separated at the discretion of the evaluator, but this is not required. However, females in season must be presented only after all male dogs entered in the event have been.

Each dog should be examined and gaited individually, as directed by the evaluators. Dogs should be observed primarily in a natural stance whenever possible, observed from all angles, and moved at a normal working trot and/or walk as may be requested by the evaluator. Bait (food or toys) may be

used at the discretion of the evaluator, but must never interfere with another dog or exhibitor.

Each evaluator shall individually examine each dog, pursuant to the Guidelines and the score sheet. The evaluators may together, or separately, observe each dog moving individually. Each evaluator shall score and make written notes on the dog's conformance to the Standard without conferring with any other evaluator. Evaluators shall not share score sheets or compare comments until all scores are finalized and recorded. After scores are finalized, verbal comments by the evaluators are permitted and encouraged, but not required.

Evaluators are strongly encouraged to be available at the completion of the event to answer questions from those who presented dogs. It is the intent of this program to foster understanding of the Standard to all Golden owners and breeders, and evaluators should comment on the Standard, and the dogs presented, accordingly. However, evaluators should be cautioned to use both discretion and candor in any remarks regarding a dog.

### C. Scoring.

Dogs are to be scored in ten categories, with a maximum of 10 points in each category and a maximum total score of 100 points. Half point increments may be used.

Explanation of the 10-point scoring system  
(10 categories x 10 points = 100 points maximum)

- 10 Outstanding: as close to ideal as can be expected.
- 9 Excellent: very high in quality; probably not commonly seen.
- 8 Very good: obvious general virtue; any flaws are slight.
- 7 Good: Primarily virtue, although may have minor faults/flaws.
- 6 Fair: somewhat better than merely acceptable.  
More merit than fault.
- 5 Acceptable: generally fulfills the basics but may be  
(a) overall only > adequate in quality for that trait; or  
(b) may be a balance of both virtues and faults in that category
- 4 Overall more flaws/faults than merit, in that category/trait.
- 3 Very obvious faults or unsoundness; strongly resembles trait of another breed.
- 2 -1 Almost wholly deficient in merit; trait present but seriously incomplete, incorrect, unsound.
- 0 Complete absence of trait; so unsound as to be useless.

Add the 10 category scores and enter in Subtotal.  
Enter any penalty in the Penalty space (see below for examples)  
Subtract any Penalty from the Subtotal and enter Final Score on that line. If the Final Score is NOT a qualifying score\*, for any reason, circle the Final Score to so indicate.

Final score 75 – 100\* = qualifies toward a CCA.  
*Dogs must earn 3 qualifying scores of 75 or higher under 3 different evaluators (at least two of whom shall be Category 1) to earn a CCA.*

Final score 65 – 74\* = qualifies toward an Honorable Mention.  
*Dogs must earn 3 qualifying scores of 65 or higher under 3 different evaluators (regardless of category) to earn an HM.*

\* A qualifying score for either CCA or HM, must have no category scored 0 – 2, and no two categories scored 4 or less, and at least 5 points in Temperament in addition to the required total score.

**NR = Not Rated** (can't examine due to misbehavior, dog ill or lame, etc.)  
Excuse the dog. *The dog will not be evaluated and will not receive a score. Note reason on score sheet.*

**NQ = Not Qualified** Any of the following:  
Scored 0 – 2 in any category. Scored 0 – 4 in any two categories, scored less than 5 in Temperament. Total score less than 65.

**Dismissed** A dog which by its behavior gives the evaluator reason to believe that it may not safely be approached and examined, or which threatens or attacks other dogs, should be dismissed. Note "dismissed" on the score sheet and explain the reason. *Dog will not be evaluated and will not receive a score. Two such dismissals and the dog will be ineligible to enter any future CCA events.*

**DQ = Disqualifying fault** Any disqualifying fault under the Breed Standard or under AKC rules (i.e., blind, deaf, changed in appearance by artificial means). *The dog will be evaluated and will receive a copy of the score sheet but must be penalized heavily enough that the score will not qualify.*

**DQ = Disqualified for** The dog attacked or attempted to attack a person. *Note the reason on the score sheet. Do not complete the evaluation; disqualify the dog. The dog's owner should receive a copy of the score sheet with the appropriate notation regarding the Disqualification.*

### Note regarding the Penalty area

Example A: the dog has a number of broken incisors which make it impossible to determine whether the bite is acceptable. Other than that, the dog has a very good head. The evaluator chooses to score the Head as an 8, giving appropriate credit there, but penalizes the dog 3 points for the undeterminable bite in the Penalty area.

Example B: The dog proves to be blind or deaf, or shows evidence of having had surgery to correct entropion. These are AKC disqualifications. The dog may be scored, but should receive a penalty severe enough to render the score non-qualifying.

Any dog that by reason of uncontrolled behavior, illness, lameness, or other reason, cannot be properly evaluated, must be excused from evaluation. The dog will be marked **NR**, "**Not Rated**". NR scores do not count as one of the six available opportunities for evaluation in attempting to qualify for a Certificate of Conformation Assessment or an Honorable Mention.

**NQ** dogs may be evaluated and receive written assessments, but NQ scores shall not count towards a CCA title nor an Honorable Mention. Any NQ score will be counted as one of the six available opportunities for evaluation in attempting to qualify for a Certificate of Conformation Assessment or an Honorable Mention.

**Temperament** Any dog that is marked "failed for temperament" will be dismissed and will not be evaluated; evaluator shall note "failed for temperament" on the score sheet and report form. A passing score in temperament is mandatory. (5 points or higher) Golden Retrievers are expected to be in a normal situation with other dogs and people and to behave in an acceptable manner. Dogs' behavior may vary within normal limits for sporting dogs, and this is not an official temperament test. Indication of undue timidity, fearfulness, nervousness or belligerence toward other dogs or people in what should be a "normal" situation, must receive some degree of penalty, even to the point of failure if warranted.

Any dog that snaps, bites, attacks or attempts to bite or attack any person must be scored zero in temperament and must be immediately disqualified and dismissed from the event.

It may not participate further that day, nor in future events, unless officially reinstated by a committee appointed by the GRCA for that purpose. Any entry fees paid will not be refunded.

Any dog that menaces or threatens the evaluator or any other person; or a dog that attacks any other dog, must be dismissed, and be rated "Not Qualified – Failed in Temperament." Any entry fees paid will not be refunded. Also refer to Section 8 concerning further eligibility of dogs which are dismissed or disqualified.

#### **D. Score Sheets/ Evaluation Forms**

Evaluators are to use evaluation forms (score sheets) as provided by the GRCA for scoring and comments. The evaluation forms should be completed in triplicate (by means of carbons, NCR, or by photocopy) at the event. At the end of the event, evaluators will present the completed evaluation forms with final scores and their signatures to the Event Secretary.

One copy of the completed evaluation form for each dog will be given to the owner/agent of that dog. One copy will be retained by the evaluator for his/her records. The original will be sent by the Event Secretary to the GRCA CCA Committee Coordinator within 14 days of the event, along with the original signed entry forms for all dogs entered, completed report forms, the printed photographs and CD. The Coordinator will forward relevant information to the CCA Committee Recorder, and then will archive the original documents.

Evaluation forms, scores and written comments, are to be kept confidential by the host club, the evaluators, and the CCA Committee, and may only be given to the dog's owner/agent, the evaluator who examined the dog, and the GRCA CCA Committee as stated above.

During the actual evaluation, the only identification on the evaluator's sheet should be the dog's armband number, date of birth, and gender (male, male/neutered, female, female/spayed), along with notation of the dog's height (and weight, if that is done) as measured at that event.

#### **10. The Event Secretary**

The hosting club's Event Secretary shall receive all entries and fees. The Event Secretary must check all entry forms before the start of the event to ensure that the required information is complete and signed by the owner or agent. The entry form shall include the dog's registered name, registration or ILP number, birth date (if known), permanent identification number, sex, owner's name and address, and handler's name if different from the owner. Sire, dam, and breeder may be requested but are not required. The event Secretary shall enter the dog's armband number on each entry form, and on an Evaluation Form for that dog.

If there is to be a draw for entries, the Event Secretary, along with other members of the host club event committee if possible, shall be responsible for conducting the draw, and shall notify the owners of dogs selected as well as alternates (if an alternate list is used). Entry forms and entry fees for dogs which are not selected shall be returned.

#### **11. Reporting and Publishing**

A completed report by the Event Secretary that indicates all dogs entered which have earned three qualifying scores, completing the requirements for a CCA Certificate shall be sent to the *Golden Retriever News* for publication. (one or two of these qualifying scores may have been awarded at a previous CCA Event). The report shall include the name of the host club, the date and place of the event, the number of dogs participating, names of the evaluators, and the names of the dogs qualifying for their CCA Certificate and their owners. A notation at the bottom of the report should read all qualifying scores "pending verification". Accompanying informal group photographs are encouraged. Individual scores and assessments/evaluations are not to be included.

Other than the report for the *Golden Retriever News*, "Publish" or "publication" means that the GRCA will have the right to publish the scores and/or written assessments/evaluations, photographs, and other pertinent information on that dog from the CCA event in some form (such as a yearbook supplement, or a separate report or booklet). Only qualifying scores and assessments may be published for identified dogs. Non-qualifying scores may be published only for statistical purposes, and non-qualifying dogs will not be identified.

Permission to publish is on the reverse side of the official CCA entry form. By signing the entry form the owner/agent is giving permission for the GRCA to publish the information on qualifying dogs and compile information for statistical purposes on all entered dogs. If a completed and signed entry form is not on file with the CCA Committee, one should be included when the actual Certificate is sent to the owner, to be signed and returned to the CCA Committee. If no completed entry form is on file, the scores and written evaluation of that dog may not be published, although other information, as in the report to the *Golden Retriever News*, may be.

Individual copies of the written evaluations from CCA events shall be sent by the CCA Committee to that dog's owner or co-owner upon written request. A reasonable fee may be charged for this service. Copies may not be released by the GRCA to any other person unless the owner or co-owner grants written permission to the GRCA CCA Committee to do so.