



# Golden Retriever Club of America

## CODE OF ETHICS

### INTRODUCTION

Below you will find the most current revision of the Code of Ethics of the Golden Retriever Club of America (GRCA). The original Code of Ethics was adopted by the GRCA Board of Directors on April 20, 1997, after many drafts, long discussions, review of other national breed clubs' Codes, and consideration of input from the membership. The Code's nature is not punitive, but rather a guideline that is informational and states the accepted norm in Golden Retrievers.

Recommendations that have changed from prior versions of this Code of Ethics are intended to apply in a forward-looking manner. For example, screening examinations that were in accordance with the Code of Ethics in effect at the time such screening examinations were performed will remain acceptable. In all such circumstances, every reasonable effort should be made to parallel as closely as possible the spirit of the most current Code.

This Code will appear in the GRCA booklet *Acquiring a Golden Retriever* and in new member packets. New members, by their application, agree to abide by and follow the guidelines outlined in the Code of Ethics. Current members, by their annual renewal, reaffirm their agreement to follow the guidelines of this Code. The Golden Retriever Club of America endorses the following Code of Ethics for its members.

### RESPONSIBILITIES AS A DOG OWNER

Members must ensure that their dogs are kept safe and under control at all times. Members should properly train their dogs so that they are an asset to their community and not a nuisance. Dogs must be maintained with their safety and good health in mind at all times, including adequate and appropriate attention, socialization, grooming, feeding, veterinary care, housing, and exercise.

### RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MEMBER OF GRCA

Members should keep in mind that they and their dogs represent the breed, GRCA, and the sport of purebred dogs in general. They are expected to maintain good sportsmanship at all events and competitions, abiding by the applicable rules and regulations. Members' conduct should always be in accordance with the objectives and intent of the GRCA Bylaws (available at [www.grca.org](http://www.grca.org)).

Members are urged to accept the Golden Retriever Breed Standard as approved by the American Kennel Club (AKC), or the standard of the country in which they reside or exhibit, as the description of the ideal temperament and physical qualities by which the breed is to be judged. Members are also encouraged to take opportunities when available to educate the public about the breed and GRCA.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES AS A BREEDER**

### **General Guidelines**

#### **I. Overview**

GRCA members who breed Golden Retrievers are encouraged to maintain the purpose of the breed, and select breeding stock with the objectives of GRCA in mind; that is:

Recognizing that the Golden Retriever breed was developed as a useful gun dog, to encourage improvement by careful and selective breeding of Golden Retrievers that possess the appearance, structure, soundness, temperament, natural ability, and personality that are characterized in the standard of the breed, and to do all possible to advance and promote these qualities.

*(Paraphrased from Article I, Section 2, of the GRCA Bylaws.)*

#### **II. Dealing with Others**

GRCA members are expected to demonstrate fairness and honesty – including full disclosure – in dealing with other owners and breeders, purchasers of dogs, and the general public. Owners of dogs involved in a breeding or sale should ensure that appropriate documentation is readily available to those concerned regarding results of screening examinations as recommended below. If any such examinations have not been done, this should be stated; and any major past or present health or temperament concerns should be disclosed.

#### **III. Responsibilities to the Dogs**

Members who breed should sell puppies, permit stud service, and/or lease dogs only to individuals who give satisfactory evidence that they will give proper care and attention to the dogs concerned, and who may be expected to act within the intent of the statements of this Code of Ethics. Members should not sell dogs at auction, or to brokers or commercial dealers. Breeders should understand that

they may need to take back, or assist in finding a new home for, any dog they produce at any time in its life, if requested to do so.

#### **IV. Record keeping**

GRCA members are expected to follow AKC requirements for record keeping, identification of dogs, and registration procedures. They are encouraged to use clear, concise, written contracts to document the sale of dogs, use of stud dogs, and lease arrangements; including the use, when appropriate, of non-breeding agreements and/or Limited Registration.

#### **Specific Guidelines**

##### **I. Dogs selected for breeding should:**

- A. Be of temperament typical of the breed, i.e., stable, friendly, trainable, and willing to work. Temperament is of utmost importance to the breed and must never be neglected or altered from the Standard.
- B. Be of conformation typical of the breed.
- C. Be in overall good health, and be physically and mentally mature (which is generally not until two years of age).
- D. Possess examination reports and certifications as outlined below to evaluate and document status concerning recommended screening examinations; and these reports should be publicly available in an approved online database. Approved online databases include registries under management of veterinary professional associations; registries maintained by non-profit organizations with veterinary staff or advisory boards; and university-based registries under veterinary advisement. U.S. registries should be used for dogs residing in the U.S., unless previously evaluated (as in III below) prior to importation.
- E. Hip and elbow certifications from the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) prior to its discontinuation in 2012 are acceptable for dogs residing in the U.S., providing the dog was 24 months of age or older at the time of the examination. Reports should be recorded in an approved online database as described above.
- F. Submission of abnormal information to the OFA online database is encouraged.

##### **II. The following reports are acceptable for dogs residing in the U.S.:**

- A. Hips – a report from the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) or PennHIP at 24 months of age or older. Since PennHIP results are not automatically published, these results should be recorded in an approved online database as described above.
- B. Elbows – a report from the OFA at 24 months of age or older.
- C. Hearts – a report from a Diplomat of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (Cardiology), at 12 months of age or older. Report should be recorded in an approved online database as described above.

- D. Eyes – a report from a Diplomat of the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmology. Examinations should be done within 12 months prior to a breeding, and results should be recorded in an approved online database as described above.
  - 1. Dogs that produce offspring should continue to have ophthalmology examinations on a yearly basis for their lifetime, and if the findings permit recertification, the results should continue to be recorded in an approved online database.
  - 2. For frozen semen from deceased dogs, either an ophthalmology examination within 18 months of the date of death, or status that was in compliance with the Code of Ethics in effect at the time of the dog's death, will be considered current.

### **III. For dogs residing outside of the U.S.:**

- A. Reports that satisfy the Code of Ethics of the parent Golden Retriever club of the country in which they reside are acceptable.
- B. Every reasonable effort should be made to parallel as closely as possible the spirit of the Code of Ethics as it applies to dogs residing in the U.S. (section II above), including recording reports in approved online databases.

### **DNA Tests**

DNA tests are available for several diseases that affect Golden Retrievers (such as for prcd-PRA, GR-PRA1, and ichthyosis), and more will certainly be added over time. The GRCA Health & Genetics Committee anticipates releasing advisory statements as new DNA tests become available. However, in a general sense, the decision to test or not should include considerations such as: the seriousness of the disease, the reliability of the test, the prevalence of the disease in the breed, and the presence of affected or carrier dogs in the vertical pedigree. The ideal use of DNA tests is to prevent producing affected puppies, while at the same time maintaining genetic diversity and gradually decreasing the prevalence of the disease gene(s) in the breed.

### **Other Considerations**

Consideration should also be given to other conditions that may have a genetic component, including but not limited to: cancer, epilepsy, hypothyroidism, skin disorders, allergies, longevity, swallowing disorders, and orthopedic disorders such as osteochondritis dissecans (OCD). Recognizing that no dog is genetically perfect; that maintaining a rich and diverse gene pool is important for the long-term health of the breed; and that good breeding decisions must balance many factors, it is suggested that breeders give the highest health priority to selection against heritable disorders that significantly decrease quality of life and that have the greatest likelihood for improvement through careful breeding decisions. GRCA members' highest motivation

is their love for their dogs, and difficult decisions should be resolved in a manner that places the best interests of the dogs and the breed at the forefront.

Adopted by the GRCA Board of Directors on April 20, 1997, and revised to include elbow clearances in May 2001. Additional revisions approved in February 2008, June 2011, and August 2012.