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Animal Crackers

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Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever

The Nova Scotia duck tolling retriever is the latest breed eligible to compete for championship points at shows held under American Kennel Club rules. There are now 150 breeds and varieties eligible for the regular classes at these shows.

Tolling is a Middle English word meaning “to lure or decoy game.” The running back and forth along the shoreline arouses the curiosity of the waterfowl and causes them to swim closer to the shore within gunshot range. The dog is sent to retrieve the dead or wounded birds.

It is thought that the basic stock was the red decoy dog brought to Nova Scotia by early settlers from Europe; crosses with other breeds, possibly setter or spaniel-type dogs and farm collies, produced the present-day toller, which has bred true for generations. It was granted official breed status by the Canadian Kennel Club in 1945. At first, it was seldom seen outside Nova Scotia but today it may be found across the United States and Canada as well as in Europe and Australia. The parent club in the United States was formed in 1984 to promote interest and safeguard the future of the breed.

The toller is the smallest of the retrievers—a medium dog in every way: medium size, medium coat, medium bone. The ideal height for a male is 19 inches, for a female 18 inches. It has a water-repellent coat and soft, dense undercoat—the tail is luxuriant and well feathered. Coat color is any shade of red.

This dog is incorrectly described as a small golden retriever although it may seem so to the untrained eye. The breed standard gives a complete description. This can be found on the AKC website—<www.akc.org>.

Indoor and Outdoor Cats

An estimated 73 million cats live in 32 percent of the households in the United States. In addition, there are large numbers of free-roaming cats—owned cats allowed to go outside as well as stray and feral cats. Every year, 70 percent (3 to 4 million) of cats that enter the nation’s shelters are euthanized.

There are many strictly indoor cats while others are allowed outdoors for a few hours during the day. Some cats are allowed unlimited outdoor access. In our society, many believe that cats are independent and can largely take care of themselves. Some educational

programs promote indoor lifestyles for cats because of the feral cat issue and to prevent illness or death associated with outdoor access. In addition, owned cats generally live longer, healthier lives than strays.

Overpopulation is a problem. Although no easy answers exist, responsible owners who have their cats neutered can help. Not only does neutering prevent unwanted kittens (one female cat and her offspring can produce as many as 420,000 kittens in seven years), but it can curb or eliminate problematic behaviors, reduces the risk of several types of cancer, and makes pets better, more affectionate companions overall.

Owner or Guardian?

Recently there have been proposals that the term “guardian” should be used instead of “owner” of dogs.

AKC has issued a position statement on this, supporting the use of the term “owner” when referring to the keeping of dogs. AKC believes that the term guardian reduces the legal status and value of dogs and thereby restricts the rights of owners, veterinarians and government agencies to protect and care for dogs. It may also subject them to frivolous and expensive legislation.

The term guardian does nothing to promote more responsible treatment of dogs. AKC strongly supports efforts to educate the public about responsible dog ownership to ensure that all dogs receive the care, love, and attention they deserve.

Bits and Pieces

- **Print or type** an “Emergency Care of Companion Animals” card and place it in your wallet. List all your animals and who should be contacted in case you are injured or hospitalized and cannot return home.

- **Acetaminophen is very toxic to cats**—as little as 50 milligrams can poison the average-sized cat. The drug is the active ingredient of Tylenol™ and other over-the-counter medication. Cats handle medications differently than humans and dogs and a veterinarian should be consulted before medication is given to cats.

- **Large amounts of chocolate** may be dangerous to dogs. The toxic ingredient is theobromine, which is similar to caffeine. Signs of overdose include hyperactivity, fast heart rate,

and possibly seizures. Small amounts may not cause any trouble although very large doses could be fatal. About 50 milligrams of theobromine per pound of body weight can cause trouble. Milk chocolate has about 44 milligrams per ounce, semisweet chocolate has 150 milligrams per ounce, and baking chocolate contains 390 milligrams per ounce. Do the math and decide if veterinary help is needed.

The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center helpline is 888-426-4435. There is a consultation charge of \$45; have your credit card at hand when you call.

- **Declawing of domestic cats** is a controversial procedure recently banned in West Hollywood, Calif. It is illegal in 25 countries but has advocates and opponents in the United States. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has a position statement stating the declawing should be considered only after attempts have been made to prevent the cat from using its claws destructively or when its clawing presents a zoonotic risk to its owners. The AVMA believes the veterinarian should provide cat owners with complete education regarding feline onychectomy. Scratching is a normal feline activity. Owners must provide scratching posts or other implements tall or long enough to allow full stretching and firmly anchored to resist scratching. Claws should be trimmed every 1 to 2 weeks. Declawed cats should be housed indoors. Surgery may be considered if scratching behavior would lead to the removal of the cat from the household.

More Groups of Animals and Others

- a business of ferrets
- a tower of giraffes
- a bloot of hippopotamuses
- a romp of otters
- a crash of rhinoceroses
- a scurry of squirrels
- a streak of tigers
- a convocation of eagles
- a stand of flamingoes
- a gaggle of geese
- a parliament of owls
- a murmuration of starlings
- a mustering of storks
- a hover of trout
- an intrusion of cockroaches
- a smack of jellyfish