

American and British Golden Retrievers: The same breed?

Source: <http://www.brightongoldens.com/AboutGoldens.html>

Our answer to this question is – not anymore! It is amazing at this point of time we could not find this point of view expressed clearly in any other place. I have run web searches I have checked the books. It looks as if we are first. Please correct us if not. There are many reasons for such a situation. Firstly there is no such statement from European sources because they do not see it as a problem. American Golden Retrievers are virtually not existent in other parts of the world except America . So why bother then? Those European authors who write books in English are also not so keen to signify these differences because they sell their books also in America . Those people which are seriously involved in breeding and showing American Goldens have no incentive to highlight these differences too. Their goal is to comply with the AKC standard and type of dog suitable for American show conditions. They are also lacking experience with British Goldens. Some of them purposefully outcross with British Goldens to achieve certain dog properties like lighter cream color, bigger head and bulkier body etc. For most of them this is the cheapest way to produce some puppies with greater demand. There are also some higher format show breeders in US which believe in some advantages from this far outcrossing. The effect of both is usually still very American style Golden. Obviously both kinds will be not keen to differentiate these two either.

With this latest proliferation of British type Goldens in America this problem is about ready to erupt. We think that a general public should get correct information and more accurate data about these dogs. So far they know only about “White Goldens”, “English Creams”, blocky heads and laid back temperament. Even worse some breeders feed them such information as “short legs” or “glowing in the darkness”, etc.). Either these breeders do not know what they are talking about or they are trying to mislead people. In both cases you better stay away from them!

(English) Golden Retriever is not a Goldendoodle or another fashionable mongrel. It has a Standard of the Breed, it has long history, it has its purpose, it has thousands of followers around the globe and it was developed into its current state through many years of selection and the quality verified on high class shows.

We will compare two basic Standards for Golden Retrievers: AKC standard used in USA by AKC (UKC has somehow very similar standard) and with one small change in Canada and (British) Kennel Club Standard used in Great Britain and rest of the world. Please note that we concentrate here on those differences especially those clearly defined. Please refer to the original standards to make this comparison complete.

Size

AKC: Males 23-24 inches in height at withers; females 21½-22½ inches.

KC: Height at withers: dogs: 22-24 ins; bitches: 20-22 ins

Although all correct American male dogs would be in spec on European shows statistically only half of good European males will qualify on American shows or be penalized.

The situation with females is even worse:

Statistically only half of correct American female Golden Retrievers will be in spec on European shows and only a quarter of good European females will qualify on American shows or be penalized.

Weight

AKC dogs 65-75 pounds; bitches 55-65 pounds. KC – no weight specification at all.

What does it mean in practice? English type Golden Retrievers are more bulky or heavy bony and more muscle than their American counterparts. It is perfectly normal – they are not fat. Compare an ideal Greyhound with Rottweiler for example. The first will be taller yet lighter than the second. They both are still 100% within their breed specs. With Golden Retriever females – because they are usually much smaller the weight spec would be more or less the same. English golden males can get easily 85-90lb being still not fat. I have asked about this with some European Champion owners. One can say there is no scale on the show – yes but the judge is touching each dog and I can tell you after checking 10 American Golden Retrievers and the English afterwards he/she says this one is too fat, which is not true. They have different structures but not fat.



This beautiful two year old Golden Retriever female has no any American blood in. This picture was taken in Europe. I have placed her here on purpose for those people who think European Golden can be only light. One could think that this one has everything what is needed and fashionable to make her American Champion. She has dense and thick coat, straight hair and thick paws and even her color

is within AKC spec. The problem is she would be too small for AKC standard while perfectly within KC Standard. Maybe some of her offspring will be able to get this title especially since big Golden seem to be a problem nowadays.

Topline

AKC: strong and level from withers to slightly sloping croup, whether standing or moving. Sloping backline, roach or sway back, flat or steep croup to be faulted.

KC: calls for level top line.

Hindquarters

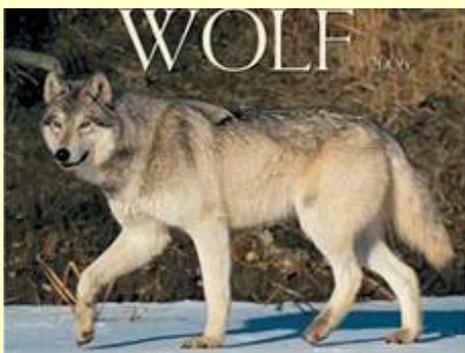
AKC: Broad and strongly muscled. Profile of croup slopes slightly; the pelvic bone slopes at a slightly greater angle (approximately 30 degrees from horizontal). In a natural stance, the femur joins the pelvis at approximately a 90-degree angle; stifles well bent; hocks well let down with short, strong rear pasterns.

KC: Loin and legs strong and muscular, good second thighs, well bent stifles. Hocks well let down, straight when viewed from rear, neither turning in nor out.

Amazingly these supposedly similar requirements give a different angulation in practice! This is very visible on these Champion pictures below. Is this the effect of twice written slightly sloping croup requirement or all these angles in the AKC Standard? English Golden have more level top line with legs more straight, American Golden Retrievers usually have slightly sloping top line with legs standing more out. KC standard is concise and straightforward: level topline! AKC allows for (slightly) sloping croup (back part) and it is the probably back door for

rewarding sloping back dogs here. In practice American judges are very lenient toward this sloping top line fault. See it on those pictures.





Personal Opinion;

Human's esthetics about a dog's beauty for some unknown reasons prefers this dramatic sloppy back. This tendency has shaped the German Shepard Dog of today. The front is walking, the back looks like it is crawling. Additionally this has produced a generally more vicious dog. It seems that some people want to shape a Golden Retriever this same way. I have heard that there are already some German Shepard Dog people who want to change the standard back but they lack reliable older type stock. This sloping tendency is not limited to just American Golden. It persists also on the other side of Atlantic although to much smaller extend then in US. KC clearly specifies level top line. Golden Retrievers originally were gun dogs. Both standards mention this. Such dog should be able to work and run fast if necessary. How such dogs look? I present here two pictures. One is a Greyhound – the canines' fastest sprinter and second land moving fastest animal. Another one is a wolf – our Golden Retriever ancestor. Their top lines are shaped not by human esthetics but by a stop watch in the first case and nature and survival need in second case. Can you see a sloping top line here? The correct structure **MUST** be there for the dog to **MOVE** correctly.

AKC: Head - Broad in skull, slightly arched laterally and longitudinally without prominence of frontal bones (forehead) or occipital bones. *Stop* well defined but not abrupt. *Foreface* deep and wide, nearly as long as skull. *Muzzle* straight in profile, blending smooth and strongly into skull; when viewed in profile or from above, slightly deeper and wider at stop than at tip. No heaviness in flews. Removal of whiskers is permitted but not preferred.

KC: Head and Skull - Balanced and well chiselled, skull broad without coarseness; well set on neck, muzzle powerful, wide and deep. Length of foreface approximately equals length from well defined stop to occiput.

AKC: Eyes friendly and intelligent in expression, medium large with dark, close-fitting rims, set well apart and reasonably deep in sockets. Color preferably dark brown; medium brown acceptable. Slant eyes and narrow, triangular eyes detract from correct expression and are to be faulted.

KC: Eyes - Dark brown, set well apart, dark rims.

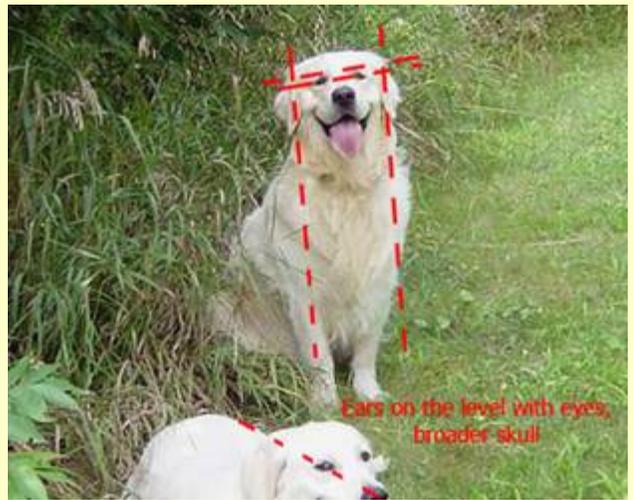
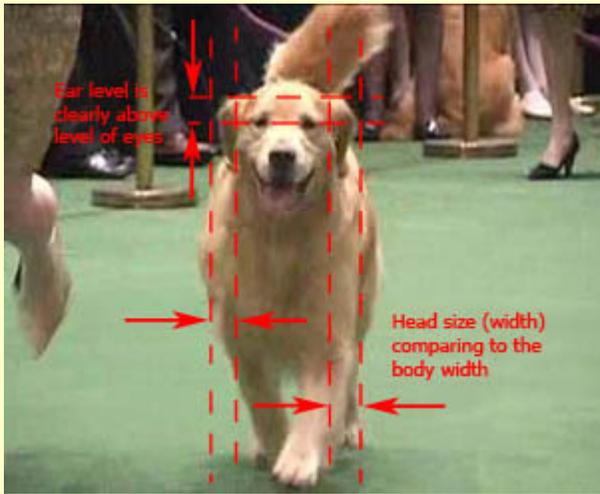
AKC: Ears rather short with front edge attached well behind and just above the eye and falling close to cheek. When pulled forward, tip of ear should just cover the eye. Low, hound-like ear set to be faulted.

KC: Ears - Moderate size, set on approximate level with eyes.

AKC: Neck medium long, merging gradually into well laid back shoulders, giving sturdy, muscular appearance. No throatiness.

KC: Neck - Good length, clean and muscular.

In both standards there is no clear indication how big the head must be in comparison to the rest of the body. These different specs resulted somehow in a generally smaller head in American Golden Retrievers than in British Golden Retrievers. This is more visible for males than females usually. See pictures below:





The term used in America to distinguish these dogs from American Golden Retrievers is blocky head. Does it mean bigger head or stronger jaws? I have searched the internet for a blocky head definition. That is what I found: Blocky: Square or cube-like formation of the head.

Blocky head: A head with a squarish, cube-like appearance. Seen on the Boston Terrier.

There is a Boston picture left. Does English Golden head fit this description?

British standard calls for a clean and muscular neck. It is perfectly understandable that for holding bigger head a dog need more muscular neck. To make it look longer or thinner there is this grooming practice used excessively for show preparation in Europe. They will sometimes cut out most of the hair on the dog's neck. That is why dogs on shows differ so much from the normal ones usually. We would rather prefer American grooming school in this subject. Still there is no mentioning about any grooming, clipping whisker trimming in KC standard. And that is one of the fundamental differences. KC Standard concentrates on description of ideal specimen. The basic function of dog titles is to make its progeny to spread. Trimming, clipping and other procedures are irrelevant if offspring of this specimen is concerned. In America the way of showing the dog is frequently more important than the dog itself.

Another very characteristic difference is foreface and muzzle. AKC standard wants it to be straight but say **nearly** the length of the skull. This resulted in smaller muzzle and more conical shape. Despite its more laconic form KC standard is more precise. It wants the length of foreface to be approximately length stop to occiput. English Goldens have definitely bigger and wider muzzle what influence stronger jaws.

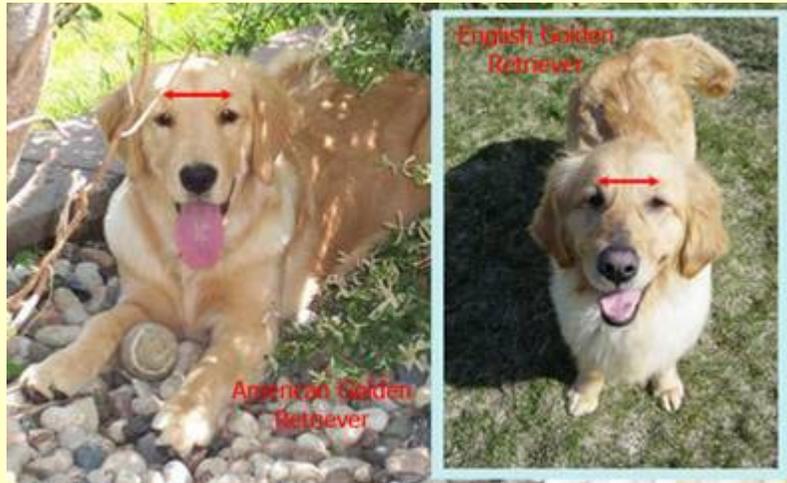


On this picture we see that British type has rather bigger jaws. American Goldens should rather avoid fighting with the British Golden ;). Fortunately they are very peaceful creatures.

British Goldens have usually bigger eyes.

Eyes – both standards are similar theoretically except that AKC standard allows for lighter “amber” color eyes. Such eyes should be penalized according to KC standard and they are virtually non-existent there. Both standards want eyes set well apart but it looks like this is interpreted differently by both sides. “Pure” American Goldens have their eyes very well apart usually while English type not. Because US Golden Retrievers have eyes are so well apart they tend to be slant, narrow, triangular and detract from correct expression sometimes. In this their eyes are defying their own standard in this but not British.

Ears and specifically their position are another point of difference between those two. AKC wants ears well behind and above level of eyes. KC wants them at the level of eyes. This causes two very different looks. See pictures below.



This feature of American Goldens is for me one of the most characteristic for this breed. Such eyes give them this “reptile” kind of look.

British type which look more intelligent somehow. This is a question of personal preferences anyway.

With some practice this feature can be used to identify a “pure” American Goldens from various mixes with the British Goldens. There was (except initially one in 20s and 30s) a lot of importing going on in history and this can change this feature somehow. Today we have even more importing and breed crossing so this feature can be especially useful.

AKC: Tail well set on, thick and muscular at the base, following the natural line of the croup. Tail bones extend to, but not below, the point of hock. Carried with merry action, level or with some moderate upward curve; never curled over back nor between legs.

KC: Set on and carried level with back, reaching to hocks, without curl at tip.

Both standards want the tail length to the point of hocks. I have the impression that especially for American Golden Retrievers this tail is in often longer than supposed to be. This seems to be in clear opposition to AKC standard which seems to be very specific about this point. Also some of those dogs tail carriage is not a moderate curve anymore. Look carefully at some of our top dogs in the earlier pictures – you will see this.



Again very characteristic picture again from the top show clearly in opposition to AKC standard. Dog's tail is the foremost expression of its body language. People who know dogs know how difficult is to control it. It can be a signal of stress. Or maybe the handler wanted to show the dog "in hard working condition" according with the Standard ;). You can find now many pictures from European shows and this feature is much less common there. What is the difference?

Coat

AKC: Dense and water-repellent with good undercoat. Outer coat firm and resilient, neither coarse nor silky, lying close to body; may be straight or wavy. Untrimmed natural ruff; moderate feathering on back of forelegs and on underbody; heavier feathering on front of neck, back of thighs and underside of tail. Coat on head, paws, and front of legs is short and even. Excessive length, open coats, and limp, soft coats are very undesirable. Feet may be trimmed and stray hairs neatened, but the natural appearance of coat or outline should not be altered by cutting or clipping.

KC: Flat or wavy with good feathering, dense water-resisting undercoat.

Here we have we have again lengthy description in AKC standard and very short one in KC standard. Why are there so many words used? To produce a dog which defies most of these? American Goldens have longer fur and many of them have too much coat. Golden Retriever was originally designed to be primarily a hunting dog. The terrain types for this hunting were wet lands, lakes and rivers surrounded frequently by trees and dense bushes. All of this happened in a usually cold climate much colder than most of US. This dense, water repellent coat is helping this dog to deal with this climate, bushes (fewer wounds) and this cold water. This coat should be dense and not too short but it should also not be too long. Too much coat does not help the dog in swimming, running through the bushes and it will be too heavy especially when wet. Why

American Golden Retrievers have so much coat? I have seen some of those not groomed household pets which looked like Golden Malteses. This happens actually to any breed of dog with relatively longer hair imported to US. Its offspring after a couple of generations will have longer coat. Why is that? Because a long coat is always easier to trim, then lengthen a coat that is too short. We have the best dog handlers and groomers in the world in US. That is why the dogs suffer. This alteration of the coat by cutting and clipping is against the standard. But which judge will be able to identify this at a show? This adaptation of the breed went so far that even the hair color structure is different in American Golden Retrievers. Darker European Golden Retrievers have a much lighter color in their undercoat than their outercoat. American Golden Retrievers coat color is more or less uniform on the whole hair shaft. Maybe to hide clipping and trimming? European Golden Retrievers especially females are often short of coat in the early age. It will often be a reason to withdraw such a girl from a show. American handlers do not want this happening to them and their girls will not have this problem. They will be ready to get points toward championship which they can start earning at the age of 6 months. By the age of 8 months they will be able to be bred according to AKC.

It is interesting to add something about fashion in this place. Although AKC (as KC) standard allows for straight or wavy coat. Those with a straight coat will dominate the champion ranks nowadays. This relation seems to be opposite on the streets and in backyards.



For this Champion (left) a handler decided to stick to Standard and not trim him (as much). For the normal owner it is an extra cost sometimes.

AKC: Color: 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.

KC: Colour: Any shade of gold or cream, neither red nor mahogany. A few white hairs on chest only, permissible.

As you can see there are many differences before I have even reached this one. Many people in US thinks that the color is the only one. The truth is that when they were initially imported to America before war the darker Golden was also in fashion in the British Isles. In 1920s and 1930s a number of dogs of the breed had been exported and were in Canada, the USA. When the breed standard had first been drawn up in Britain by the Golden Retriever Club in 1911, cream had been excluded as a permissible color, and in the 1920's light-colored dogs were not popular, the favored color being sometimes very red and dark indeed. But the lighter color gained greatly in popularity in the early 30's and in 1936 the Standard was altered to read 'Any shade of gold or cream, but neither red or mahogany' as it was realized that a mistake had been made in not allowing the original color. How did it happen that they stayed darker or even went darker here while it went much lighter on the other side of Atlantic? Different climate? The fact is that these dogs at the very beginning were not called Golden Retrievers but Yellow (Retrievers). There is evidence that the earliest 19th and early 20th century Goldens were light or cream color. A light, cream color is dominant and it has strong tendency to return in future generations. This thesis seems to be true for English type Goldens only. For example we have tried to find existing pictures of our dog's ancestors. The older pictures we found the darker the dogs were. Our dog is the lightest of all of them. Check Basil Pedigree section of this web site to see them.



First, original Goldens in 19th century were lighter as you can see on these two paintings on the left. It was decided in Britain in 1911 that they should be darker, Golden color only. The picture on the right was taken around 1930 in Britain. It was colorized but I think these colors are more or less adequate to the real ones. It is interesting to see how their appearance was evolving with the time.

A cream color is undesirable by AKC standard. Currently majority of British type Golden Retrievers, especially those imported to US lately, have this color therefore they will be undesirable on AKC shows as well. Some people like this color because they like light and cream colors generally. So our dogs match our homes interior design. I like this color because I can see them easily when I let them off a leash in the dark. Maybe Lord Tweedmouth, the first originator of the breed had the same in mind when he selected a light, yellow dog from the Black wavy coat

Retriever litter when he started this breed. As you can see above Kennel Club allows only for a couple of white hair on the chest. **Those dogs are not white or at least they should not be!** Some American breeders persuade the public that they have “white Golden” or they will be white. Or they are misleading you, or they do not know their subject or they are trying to invent another new breed. This latest is very unlikely of course.

Please understand also that the color is not as much important in Europe. Some people there like lighter ones some like darker. Their value is the same. We have to admit that there are more lighter ones lately. For these reasons you will often see mating darker with light dog and there is nothing wrong in this. They can be any shade of gold or cream so any combination will be OK. Even if you buy here your supposedly "white" puppy remember that even if not its dam and sire some of ancestors were much darker than this puppy is. Inheritance laws are not as simple as paint mixing. Many things can have influence like gene dominance, etc. The table below shows the family tree of real Golden. We can supply you their pedigrees upon request.



Grand Sire - Golden



Grand Dam - light cream



A Sire - Dark Golden



**His daughter with a whole litter
all light cream**

English type Golden Retrievers are usually very light when young but they darken a bit especially after 1.5 years. It is relatively easy to take such a picture that makes them look like white. The best pictures to see the true color in are those with snow in the background – see examples.

On the other hand it is understandable that in comparison with the red or mahogany American Goldens they may look white to some people. Let's clear up some misconceptions many people in the US have. Many clients say that want the lightest dog possible or a white golden. US English Golden population is not representative because we are importing only the lightest ones. Brighton Goldens can supply you the lightest Goldens of course too – certainly not less light than other breeders can. Remember that proper Golden Retrievers come in many shades of gold and cream but not white.

Another interesting observation concerning color is that AKC allows for graying or whitening of face or body due to age while KC say nothing about this. For me these older dogs do not look as nice. It is unlikely that you will have this if you have a British origin Golden Retriever.



The female puppy on the picture on the right will actually be slightly darker (especially top side) than my female dog Sherry. She poses on this picture with her older American friend. On this picture she looks completely white.

3 people refused to buy her only because she was not light enough. Madness? She is perfect! It was probably fortunate for her they did not buy her because she has found a really nice place now.



The first picture above shows my female dog – Sherry in winter at the age of 6 months. The other picture shows her at almost 1 year. One could think it is not the same dog. She was actually a bit lighter because she was younger. I have not “fixed” these pictures except cropping and resizing. It will be very difficult to find a lighter Golden Retriever than Sherry. Beware of this photo effect.



This is an American Golden Retriever puppy on snow for comparison (left).

Left picture below shows 7 years old American Golden. On the right side there are 2 Goldens from Britain male 6 years old (bigger) and female 11 years old. In all 3 cases they were rescued dogs – to compare apples with apples.



End of part 1. The second part will be coming soon. It will deal with temperament and behavior differences. Some theories what caused these differences and what is the solution will be presented.

Disclaimer: Pictures presented here are taken as an illustration of the thesis not for advertising purposes. There are no names or specification given. The resemblance to the existing dogs can be coincidental and these pictures can be taken out and replaced with others.

More information you can find in:

The Ultimate Golden Retriever by Valerie Foss (Editor)

It is advisable for all of our clients to get this book below before making a decision on buying a Golden Retriever puppy from us or any other source. This book is not only about the standards but you can find basically anything you would need to know about the breed. This great book is written by world class specialists, from both sides of the Atlantic.

Other sources: Golden Retriever Standards

We have knowledge about three different breed standards being used currently in different places of the world. We think that British Kennel Club standard is used by all important countries in the world except US and Canada. This is because [FCI](#) - the world's largest purebred dog organization uses standards of the country of origin standards. In this case country of origin was Great Britain and that is why most of the world use Kennel Club standard and the British type is so prevalent there. Most of the countries in the world belong [FCI](#) except those three below:

THE KENNEL CLUB



British Kennel Club Breed Standard - <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/item/108>

The standard seems to be so concise. That it enables a greater variety of interpretations.



American Kennel Club Breed Standard

http://www.akc.org/breeds/golden_retriever/index.cfm

The careful reader will find many differences between the American and British standards. It is not only color like many people think.



CANADIAN KENNEL CLUB



Canadian Kennel Club Breed Standard

<http://www.ckc.ca/en/Default.aspx?tabid=99&BreedCode=RTG>

The Canadian Kennel Club, is a mixture of both of the standards .Probably to accommodate these two types of Golden Retrievers.