

Pedigrees: Understanding Health Certificates and Titles – Part II

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In Part I, Understanding Retriever Pedigrees, I explained how pedigrees can be read to learn about your new pup's relationship to its ancestors. Now, let's examine the titles and health clearance information normally noted on pedigrees. But before we can examine the pedigree, let's look at the organizations issuing titles and clearance numbers, and the associated abbreviations.

Health Certifications

The **Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA)** reviews X-rays for hip dysplasia. Dogs must be at least 24 months to be certified dysplasia-free and receive an OFA number (good for the life of the dog); however, the dog may receive a preliminary evaluation at younger than 24 months for the purposes of determining if there is any indication of future genetic hip problems. Any dog determined by the OFA to have hip dysplasia cannot receive an OFA number. Certified dogs are rated as "fair," "good," or "excellent" by a panel of orthopedic veterinarians.

An example of an OFA certification number as it would appear on tin OFA certification form is: OFA GR54321F27M. Breaking it down, the letters GR stand for golden retriever (CB for Chesapeake, LR for Labrador retriever); the 54321 is the certification number assigned to that particular dog; the F stands for the rating quality of the hips - fair (G for good, E for excellent); the next two numbers give the dog's age in months when the X-ray was taken; and finally, the M at the end is the sex of the dog - male. If the dog is tattooed or micro-chipped, a T will follow the letter that indicates the sex of the dog.

Many breeders abbreviate the OFA numbers on a pedigree to, for instance, 54321F27 (OFA clearance No. 54321, fair hip evaluation at 27 months) to save space, knowing that the pedigree is for a golden retriever and that the dog is male as indicated by his position on the diagram of the pedigree. Often, all that a breeder includes on a pedigree is the number itself without the hip quality rating or the dog's age, figuring that if the dog has a number, he or she is not dysplastic, and that is all that matters.

The OFA also critiques X-rays of elbows for dysplasia. The number appears as OFA EL221, which indicates that it is an elbow certification number 221.

OFA radiographs are most often done by a local veterinarian and submitted to the OFA panel for evaluation. Some vets arc quite adept at shooting these X-rays; some are not. The consensus rating given by the OFA panel is strictly conjecture, and slight differences in the structure of the hips or the quality of the X-ray can cause differences in the ratings. In reality, many dogs that are

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X-rayed and evaluated by a local veterinarian as being dysplastic never have their radiographs submitted; therefore, an accurate percentage of afflicted dogs within a breed will never be available. At this time, approximately 28 percent of dogs submitted within each of the retriever breeds is estimated to be dysplastic. All a breeder can do is breed certified dogs to certified dogs and keep his fingers crossed.

PennHip is a relatively new evaluation method for determining hip dysplasia. The PennHip technique measures joint laxity (looseness) of the Hips with an index range of 0 to 1. While the dog is under anesthesia, both a compression and distraction view are taken of the hips. At present, OFA is still the standard for determining canine hip dysplasia; but as PennHip is proven, it will likely become more accepted.

The PennHip index range is shown as a percentage compared to other retrievers of the same breed. Thus, a Labrador with an index of 60 percent would be in the upper 40 percent of all Labradors rated to date. The current problem with the PennHip technique is that until a large cross section of each breed is rated, the actual index percentage within that breed will likely be somewhat inaccurate.

The **Canine Eye Register Foundation (CERF)** certifies dogs for inheritable eye diseases. The examination must be done by a board certified canine ophthalmologist and then submitted to CERF for a certification number. Most veterinary teaching schools and larger cities have a certified ophthalmologist who can do the exam; many ophthalmologists travel to vet clinics in rural areas on a regular basis to do examinations. The examination looks for hereditary eye problems such as *progressive retinal atrophy*, *retinal dysplasia*, *cataracts*, and so forth. A dog of any age that passes the exam can be given a CERF number; however, the number is only good for one year.

CERF numbers appear as CERF GR 7654/97-36 on a pedigree. This would be read as a golden retriever with the CERF number 7654; the 97 indicates the year the dog was certified; the 36 is the dog's age in months when certified. Remember that this rating is only good for one year (and some types of eye diseases often show up later in life), so it is important and easy to tell from a pedigree whether the breeder has kept up on a dog's eye exams. It is not unusual for a breeder to have his breeding stock re-CERF'ed every two years or just before a breeding takes place. Also, it is common to see the CERF number abbreviated on a pedigree as 7654/97, which actually gives the pertinent information - we know the pedigree is for a golden retriever, and the CERF number and current date (within a year) is really what counts.

Titles

The American Kennel Club (AKC); the United Kennel Club (UKC), which is the sponsoring organization for the Hunting Retriever Club (HRC); and the North American Hunting Retriever Association (NAHRA) are the major organizations that hold tests for the purpose of evaluating the performance of retrievers. The Canadian Kennel Club (CKC) is the Canadian equivalent of the AKC; the individual breed clubs also award titles and other designations.

AKC Titles Competitive titles

(Shown before a dog's name on an AKC pedigree):

- ◆ **NFC – National Field Champion:** Winner of the annual National Open Field Trial Championship. To qualify for this event, dogs accumulate points by winning in club trials. This is one of the titles every field trial competitor strives for.
- ◆ **NAFC – National Amateur Field Champion:** Winner of the annual National Amateur Field Trial Championship. Dogs must be handled by non-professionals, although the dogs can be professionally trained. To qualify, dogs accumulate points by winning in club trials. This is the other title every field trial competitor desires.
- ◆ **FC – Field Champion:** Open stakes field trial title awarded for accumulating points and wins at club trials; open to professional and amateur handlers and to dogs of all ages.
- ◆ **AFC – Amateur Field Champion:** Amateur-only handled field trial title awarded for accumulating points and wins at club trials; open to dogs of all ages, whether professionally or amateur trained.
- ◆ **CH – Champion:** Championship title won in dog shows. No field ability is required to qualify for this award.
- ◆ **DC or Dual CH – Dual Champion:** Conformation Show Champion (CH) and Open stakes Field Champion (FC). A dog with CH and AFC titles does not qualify for the title of Dual Champion.
- ◆ **OTCH – Obedience Trial Champion:** Championship won in obedience trial competition. No field ability is required to qualify for this award.

Noncompetitive titles

(shown after the dog's name on an AKC pedigree):

- ◆ **MH - Master Hunter:** The highest level noncompetitive field title (hunt test title), earned by qualifying at the club hunt test level in six Master Hunter level events.
- ◆ **SH - Senior Hunter:** The intermediate level noncompetitive field title, earned by qualifying at the club hunt test level in five Senior Hunter level events.
- ◆ **JH - Junior Hunter:** The basic level noncompetitive field title, earned by qualifying at the club hunt test level in four Junior Hunter level events.
- ◆ **CD - Companion Dog:** Novice Class obedience title; no field ability is required to qualify for this award.
- ◆ **CDX - Companion Dog Excellent:** Open Class obedience title.
- ◆ **UD - Utility Dog:** Utility Class obedience title.
- ◆ **TD - Tracking Dog:** The basic title earned in tracking tests. These dogs are required to track human scent, but no field ability is required to qualify for this award.
- ◆ **TDX - Tracking Dog Excellent:** The advanced title earned in tracking tests.
- ◆ **UDT - Utility Dog Tracker:** The basic title earned as a combination of obedience and tracking. These dogs show a high level of obedience training and are required to track human scent, but no field ability is required to qualify for this award.
- ◆ **UDTX - Utility Dog Tracker Excellent:** The advanced title earned as a combination of obedience and tracking.

UKC Titles

These titles appear before a dog's name. They are noncompetitive hunting titles and obedience titles and are recognized only by the UKC; they appear on UKC-certified pedigrees and the pedigrees from some breeders.

- ◆ **GRHRCH - Grand Hunting Retriever Champion:** This title is similar to the AKC Master Hunter title, earned by qualifying at the Hunting Retriever Club's (HRC) national event for qualified retrievers.
- ◆ **HRCH - Hunting Retriever Champion:** Also similar to the AKC Master Hunter title, earned by qualifying at the Finished level of the HRC's club tests.
- ◆ **HR - Hunting Retriever:** This title is similar to the AKC Senior Hunter title, earned by qualifying at the Intermediate level of the HRC's club tests.
- ◆ **U-CD - UKC Companion Dog:** A Novice Class obedience title. No field ability is required to qualify for this award.
- ◆ **U-CDX- UKC Companion Dog Excellent:** The open Class obedience title.

NAHRA Titles

These titles appear before a dog's name. They are noncompetitive hunt test titles and are not recognized by any breed registration club other than NAHRA, but they are often seen on breeder's pedigrees. NAHRA tests require retrievers to demonstrate the ability to quarter and flush birds and to track cripples, in addition to marked and blind retrieves.

- ◆ **GRMHR - Grand Master Hunting Retriever:** This title is similar to the AKC Master Hunter title and the most advanced of the NAHRA hunt test titles, requiring more qualifications than the MHR titled below.
- ◆ **MHR - Master Hunting Retriever:** This title is also similar to the AKC Master Hunter title.
- ◆ **WR - Working Retriever:** This is similar to the AKC Senior Hunter title.

CKC Titles

The Canadian Kennel Club awards competitive and noncompetitive titles to dogs; these do not show on AKC-certified pedigrees but are often shown on pedigrees from breeders. These Canadian titles have an AKC equivalent that is fairly obvious; not-so-obvious similarities are noted.

Competitive Titles (appearing before the dog's name):

- ◆ **CNFC - Canadian National Field Champion**
- ◆ **CNAFC - Canadian National Amateur Field Champion**
- ◆ **CFC- Canadian Field Champion**
- ◆ **CAFC - Canadian Amateur Field Champion**
- ◆ **CAN CH- Canadian Champion**

Noncompetitive Titles (appearing after the dog's name):

- ◆ **CAN CD - Candian Companion Dog**
- ◆ **CAN CDX- Canadian Champion Dog Excellent**
- ◆ **CAN UD - Canadian Utility Dog**
- ◆ **CAN WCX - Canadian Working Certificate Excellent:** The most advanced Canadian certification, similar to AKC's Master Hunter title.
- ◆ **CAN WCI - Canadian Working Certificate Intermediate:** The intermediate Canadian working certificate, similar to AKC's Senior Hunter title.
- ◆ **CAN WC - Canadian Working Certificate:** The basic Canadian working certificate, similar to AKC's Junior Hunter Title.

Breed Club Titles

- ◆ These titles are recognized only by the individual breed clubs and are seen quite often on breeder's pedigrees. These titles are noncompetitive and appear after the dog's name.
- ◆ **WDQ- Working Dog Qualified:** Awarded by the American Chesapeake Club, approximating the AKC Master Hunter title. (No other breed club presently awards a working certificate title similar to the AKC Master Hunter title.)
- ◆ **WDX or WCX- Working Dog Excellent or Working Certificate Excellent:** This title is similar to the AKC Senior Hunter title. The designation (WDX or WCX) depends upon the breed club awarding the title.
- ◆ **WD or WC - Working Dog or Working Certificate:** This is the basic working certificate title, similar to AKC Junior Hunter title.

In addition, some national breed clubs recognize dogs that have field trial awards but haven't accumulated enough points or wins to have earned an FC or AFC title. These are designated in the form of stars appearing after the dog's name on some pedigrees. For an exact description of these star designations, contact the specific breed club, as they could vary depending upon the club.

** Indicates dogs with competitive field trial placements.

*** Indicates dogs that are qualified All-Age competitive field trial dogs, but have not satisfied the requirements of an FC or AFC title.

**** Indicates this dog is a sire or dam with five or more offspring that have the aforementioned two or three stars, or five or more offspring that have completed FC or AFC titles.

Please note: Occasionally, new titles are added or existing ones are revised by the awarding organizations. If I have overlooked any significant field titles, if any titles have been added, or if the qualifications necessary to earn the title have changed, it is simply an oversight on my part.