

Smooth Salukis, like malt whiskey, oysters and foreign films are an acquired taste.

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Smooth Going

Brian Duggan

Smooth Salukis, like single malt whiskey, oysters, and foreign films are an acquired taste. Not everyone gets past that first impression of a job not completed or a perceived lack of elegance. I do not remember exactly when I first saw a smooth Saluki, but I do recall thinking that the dog looked somewhat unfinished. Now mind you, this comes from a man who when he first saw a feathered Saluki, thought they looked distinctly effeminate. Not a man's type of dog at all. My opinion on both counts has changed, although I will say in my own defence that I came from many years of owning Irish Wolfhounds (hard to get more manly than that...) and hence the reader may well understand the bias behind my first impression of a Saluki.

When my wife first selected a smooth to sire one of our litters, I was dismayed, but nonetheless respected her knowledge of our lines and grudgingly acknowledged that she knew best. She explained to me about the genotypes of the smooth and the feathered, and made it clear that each puppy in this litter would have a 50-50 chance of being smooth, but overall we could expect that about

half the litter might be smooths. We would keep one feathered and one smooth puppy from Chabeli's litter she announced. Further dismay. Smooths were alright for some people but I didn't especially want one in my house. But if that was what she wanted, I guess it would be alright. You can't argue about these things. After all, I did get used to that bedspread she bought. Besides, the odds were even that we might not get any smooths. That cheered me up enormously.

I decided that more information was needed. On the purest whim, I looked up the word 'smooth' in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary. Here's what it says.

smooth \ˈsmūth\ *adj* [ME *smothe*, fr. OE *smōth*; akin to OS *smōthi* smooth]

1a: having a continuous even surface **b:** being without hair **c:** GLABORUS **d:** causing no resistance to sliding **2:** free from obstructions or impediments <broad - highways> **3:** even and uninterrupted in flow or flight **4:** plausibly flattering; INGRATIATING **5a:** SERENE, EQUABLE **b:** AMIABLE, COURTEOUS **6:** sounded without the aspirate - used of a Greek vowel < ~ breathing > **7:** not sharp

OR acid: BLAND SYN see EASY, LEVEL, SUAVE - **smooth** *adj* - **smoothly** *adv* - **smoothness** *n.*

Well that didn't sound too bad. Then again, there was...

smooth hound *n:* a dogfish (as *Mustelus mustelus* of southern European waters) lacking a spine in front of the dorsal fin.

Now that wasn't any help at all. However alien smooths were to me, I was pretty sure that they didn't have fins, but I was glad to know they wouldn't have spines on any dorsal fins they might happen to have. Ever the optimist, I continued to use my mental powers to persuade Chabeli not to have any smooths and my wife not to keep them if Chabeli did have them.

The puppies were born. At birth you cannot tell who is smooth and who is not. When the pups were three weeks old, we made an educated guess that one male and one female of the five were smooths. A distinct sleekness of coat, and lack of wavy texture on the ears were the only clues at this point. By five weeks the development of the wavy feathering

on the other three puppies left no doubt that we were right in our guess. The puppies were all as well formed and as bouncy as you could hope for and there was certainly no difference in temperament among them. Hmm... I would have to keep a close eye on those smooths.

As we watched the puppies grow and began to evaluate them critically, it became increasingly evident that the two smooths were the best of the litter. My wife now began to talk about keeping both of them and with feeble protests, I resigned myself to the inevitable. Well they were at least as smart if not smarter than the rest of the puppies. They were active and inquisitive and definitely affectionate. So the smooth littermates stayed with us and became part of our pack. They were decidedly smart and charming and in spite of determined resistance, soon wormed their way into my affections.

I can report to you that I have been able to objectively observe and record the differences between smooth and feathered Salukis at close range for four years now. For readers who have not had the experience of sharing a home with a smooth, let me present certain characteristics that are unique to smooths.

Lack of feathering

The most obvious characteristic of a smooth. The key here is that the minimal grooming that a Saluki requires is even more minimal with smooths. This is a distinct advantage for the dog that spends a lot of time in the field, the lazy owner, or both.

Food consumption deception

Like the old joke about being hungry an hour after eating Chinese food, smooths seem to have a black hole that all food disappears into, and yet they give the impression of being perpetually hungry. Do not trust them in matters of food. Smooths will lie to you about this. You can personally dish out their rations, watch them inhale their food and then watch as

they polish off everyone else's food that was the least bit slow in consumption. They will then come over to you and tell you that they haven't seen food for days. Do not believe them. They lie.

Increased thermo-tactile tendencies

Smooths will arrange themselves next to, around, or on top of you so as to distribute the maximum square footage of their skin against your body. This skin contact starts a chemical reaction in the smooth's body that increases their body temperature by 20° Fahrenheit. The more uncomfortable it is for you, the closer they want to be. Smooths will do this to you regardless of record heat waves, crackling fires in the hearth, or the fact that you have just put on your best evening clothes.

Variable body mass and surface area

The head of a smooth resting on your legs at the beginning of your sleep period will logarithmically increase in mass until exactly one hour before your alarm is due to go off. At this point critical mass is achieved and the lack of circulation, deadened nerves, and crushed flesh will painfully wake you up, with no chance of moving the dog or getting back to sleep before the alarm goes off. If the smooth does not sleep on top of you, it will then arrange itself on the bed so as to occupy the largest possible amount of horizontal real estate. This will make it impossible for you to adequately cover yourself with blankets. Your freezing feet and backside will wake you (you guessed it!), exactly one hour before the alarm goes off. Again, there is no hope of going back to sleep or shifting the dog.

Ability to teleport

Smooths have the ability to move through solid objects (not to be confused with levitating, which they also do). When placed on one side of an object such as a door, fence, or wall, the smooth will miraculously

appear on the other side. I have seen a smooth on one side of a four foot gate and in the time it took me to blink, the smooth was on the other side. In our house smooths have mysteriously appeared behind locked doors, fences, cupboards, and bitches in season. Some teleportations are quick and easy, others require more time and effort. A smooth on top of the covers at bedtime will take the entire night to move through and appear underneath the blankets in the morning. This is not a learned behaviour as even smooths that are raised alone will instinctively know how to teleport. Nothing you can do will prevent this.

I have extensive documentation of these phenomena. Other smooth owners corroborate my findings. In fact, smooth owners usually attribute anything and everything to the fact that the dog is a smooth. If the dog eats too little, it's a smooth. If it eats too much, it's a smooth. If it is exceptionally cuddly, it's a smooth. If it is stand-offish, it's a smooth. If it sleeps all day, it's a smooth. If it acts like a demented living room athlete, it's a smooth. You get the general idea...

Anyway, after years of observation and close contact (sometimes you can't pry them off you) I have developed a taste for smooths as well as for feathereds. The smooth bitch that we kept became a mother herself and we now have her smooth daughter. She shows every sign of being as sweet, clever, and hellacious as her mother.

As I said, smooths like single malt whiskey, oysters, and foreign films are an acquired taste. I appreciate single malt whiskey as well as blended scotch and the smooth as well as the feathered Saluki. I highly recommend all of these to you. They compliment each other nicely. And when next you contemplate a smooth, try one, it's a taste worth acquiring.