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. Brian Duggan gives an informed view on the attractions of the smooth—a taste worth acquiring.

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 (smōth) adj [ME smote, OE smēth, akin to OS smēthi smooth] 1a: having a continuous even surface b: being without hair c: CLARIOUS d: causing no resistance to sliding 2: free from obstructions or impediments <broad highways> 3: even and uninterrupted in flow or flight 4: pleasurably flattering INCRITATIONAL 5a: SERENE, EQUABLE 6: AMABLE, COURTEOUS 6a: sounded without the aspirate — used of a Greek vowel <— breathing > 7: not sharp or acid: BLAND SYT; see BAY, LEVEL, SVAZE - smooth adj; smooth*ly ado - smooth*ness 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 hunky 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.