

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LABRADOR RETRIEVER

Introduction

It is against the policy of the Labrador Retriever Club Inc. to recommend specific breeders, stud dogs or kennels. Accordingly, the club records do not contain information regarding members providing stud services, or having puppies for sale.

Because of your interest, we have prepared this brochure to better acquaint you with the characteristics of the breed, and to assist you in the selection of a puppy or breeder, or stud service.

It is our sincere wish that the following information will prove helpful.

History

The Labrador Retriever first made its appearance at English maritime towns that were engaged in the fishing industry with Newfoundland. Early in the nineteenth century, the first Labradors (or Lesser Newfoundland or St. Johns Dogs as they were called) were imported into England by Lord Malmsbury. He was greatly attracted to the dog and he and Colonel Peter Hawker purchased several dogs from fisherman that brought them over from Newfoundland. Colonel Hawker in his book "Instructions to Young Sportsman", written in 1814, describes the Labrador "as by the far the best for every kind of shooting".

From this early beginning the dog was developed into the Labrador of today – one that excels as a gun dog, is a loyal companion and has the conformation and quality to hold its own with all breeds at dog shows.

Because the Labrador was a dual-purpose dog, not one from which the working and show types are entirely different as in so many other sporting dogs, the breed soon attracted the attention of sportsmen in this country. However, it was not until after World War II that the breed obtained popularity.

Today the Labrador is the second most popular breed in the United States.

You may be interested in the Labrador Retriever for many reasons – a family pet, a hunting companion, a field trial competitor, obedience training, or a show dog. Whatever your intentions, the dog requires the same conformation and physical condition. Whatever your objective, only you – the owner – through affection, care and training can enable the Labrador to fulfill its potential.

Choosing a Reputable Breeder

The first step in acquiring a Labrador Retriever puppy is selecting a reputable breeder. Buying a dog is much akin to purchasing a diamond; if you are not yourself an expert, you must rely upon the knowledge and integrity of the seller. The options open to you as a buyer are as follows:

1. *Pet Shop or Animal Dealer:* In our opinion, this is the worst possible place to buy a dog. Hardly a week goes by that we do not hear "horror stories" from unsuspecting purchasers of Labrador puppies bought at pet shops. Most are sold at exorbitant prices far out of line for the quality of the puppy. Many are sickly, resulting in high veterinary bills, or even worse – death within days or weeks from the date of purchase. In other cases AKC registration papers are not always provided and certified pedigrees are seldom available. Remember, all puppies are cute – how they mature is dependent upon the breeder and the breeding. Many dogs sold by pet shops as Labrador Retrievers grow up with little resemblance to the breed.

2. *"Backyard" Breeders:* This is frequently a person that owns a Labrador female and sees the opportunity to make easy money. Usually, this type of breeder knows nothing about conformation and the dam is often not worthy of breeding. Lack of knowledge of the breed also results in the selection of an equally unworthy sire, frequently a dog owned by a friend or neighbor. In almost every case, the breeder is not experienced in the proper care and feeding of a pregnant dam or the puppies after they arrive. This

type of breeder may not have the sire x-rayed for hip dysplasia or checked by a veterinarian for eye disease or other congenital problems. Unfortunately, many do not even care. Their only objective is to sell puppies and make a profit.

3. Professional Dog Breeders: This category represents those breeders maintaining a commercial enterprise. Frequently they are breeders of more than one breed of dog, often are also operating a boarding kennel, and sometimes are also engaged as dog trainers or professional handlers. While some maintain excellent breeding stock and have excellent reputations, many operate what is called “puppy factories” and are interested only in making profits. As a general rule, their prices are significantly higher than the “hobby breeder”. One should exercise extreme care in purchasing a puppy from this type of breeder and seek references from former clients.

4. Dedicated Hobby Breeders: These breeders can be identified by their attitude, the condition of their dogs, and the overall environment of their residence and dog facilities. Their dogs receive periodic eye examination by a board certified Ophthalmologist, both sire and dam of the litter have been certified by the OFA (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals), they provide a litter registration form from the AKC (American Kennel Club) and a three or more generation pedigree with each puppy. Additionally, each puppy sold is guaranteed sound and free from congenital defects. Moreover, their puppies cost no more (and often less) than those sold by a pet shop, a puppy factory or a black yard breeder. Some guidelines for identifying an acceptable breeder of Labrador Retrievers are presented below:

- 1) They should be members of the Labrador Retriever Club and/or area Labrador Club, or Retriever Field Trial Club. Membership in these organizations indicated length and depth of involvement in the breed.

- 2) The breeder should provide evidence of their involvement in the breed and be able to provide proof of the number of titled dogs they have owned or bred. Since the Labrador is a dual-purpose dog, the breeder should prove involvement in hunting or fieldwork.
- 3) If requested, the breeder should provide references either from former purchasers, their veterinarian or their contemporaries.
- 4) The breeder must be able to provide proof that both the sire and dam are free from hereditary eye defects, hip dysplasia and other congenital defects. In addition, a record of dates and types of vaccinations given to the puppies, together with written instructions on feeding, training (including house breaking) and care should be provided.
- 5) Reputable breeders provide a pedigree, together with a “blue slip” to apply for registration of the puppy with the AKC – both pedigree and registration should be provided at no extra charge.
- 6) It is the policy of reputable breeders to insist that you have the puppy examined by your veterinarian to insure the inoculations are continued and the puppy is sound and healthy.

If a breeder fails to meet any of the foregoing requirements, you should probably look elsewhere for your puppy. Remember, all puppies are cute, including those available at the local do pound; you are not purchasing just another puppy, you are adopting a Labrador Retriever into your family, you should be assured that he/she will develop into the wonderful dog that is our breed.

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SELECTING A PUPPY

A long time ago, a respected breeder stated that if he could pick show or field trail prospects at six or eight weeks of age, he would quit work and make a fortune traveling

around the country selecting puppies for a few. The truth is, reputable breeders follow the policy of “breeding the best to the best and hope for the best”. Also, as a general rule, the puppy will be better (not worse) than the parents. Accordingly, when selecting a puppy, you should only buy from a reputable breeder and be satisfied that both sire and dam are sound, have good dispositions and represent what you expect the puppy to look like when it is full-grown. Be wary of breeders that tell you a six or eight week old puppy is a future champion or field champion.

It is also good to take your time when buying a puppy. You may have to wait weeks or even months for a suitable puppy. Some well-known, reputable breeders have waiting lists for their puppies, accordingly you may be asked to place a deposit to reserve a puppy in the litter of your choice. Unlike other retrievers, Labradors are available in three colors – black, yellow and chocolate. There is absolutely no relationship between color and ability, disposition or other traits. The color you choose is just that, a matter of esthetic preference. Frequently there may be puppies of different color in the same litter and often there may be yellow puppies in litters where both sire and dam are black. This is merely an indication that the parents carry a recessive yellow gene.

All puppies are cute and appealing. In selecting a Labrador Retriever you should look for a miniature Labrador Retriever – dark pigmentation, dark nose, compact bodies, sturdy build, straight legs, and short “otter tail.” The coat should be short and dense. All healthy puppies are active and eager to play. However, many breeders will not permit you to touch or hold the puppies until after they have received their inoculations. If you are interested in acquiring a show prospect, avoid white markings, however, this does not affect the puppy’s usefulness for other purposes.

If you are offered several puppies to select from, remember, many breeders deliver puppies in order of reservation. Make sure the breeder knows your particular purpose: family pet, hunting companion, show prospect, etc. and seek their opinion. They have observed the litter since birth and

have become familiar with the individual traits and characteristics. Reputable breeders will do their best to assure you are completely satisfied.

Things you should look for in selecting a puppy

(Written by Nick Mickelson, Ann L. Huntington, DVM, & Sylvia Cracchiolo – Labrador Retrievers Club, Inc.)

- 1) Does the puppy appear healthy? A good healthy puppy will have clear, shiny eyes that are free from discharge. Its coat will be glossy with a minimum of flaking skin. It should be alert and playful. How about its littermates and the dam? Look around at others in the litter – all should appear healthy and well-fed. It is also wise to consider the cleanliness of the puppy’s surroundings. Look around for any fecal matter that may not have been removed yet. Is the stool well-formed or sloppy? A clean environment and robust family of dogs are very good signs!
- 2) How is the mother’s temperament? If the sire and dam are present, how do they behave? A surprising amount of behavior is inherited. Also, the puppies’ environment has a great deal to do with their personalities. The parent may be one of the best indications of the future temperament of your new puppy.
- 3) Have the parents’ hips been radiographed (X-rayed)? Hip dysplasia is a potentially crippling abnormality of the hip joint formation that, unfortunately, does occur in this breed. While there are several factors involved in hip dysplasia, it is well known that it is at least partly inherited. It may take several years for the painful arthritis associated with hip dysplasia to become apparent, but the hips can be checked by x-ray examination before breeding. Making sure that both parents, and as many of

their relatives as possible, are radiographed free of hip dysplasia will help you to avoid this sad condition.

- 4) Have the parents had their eyes examined? Unfortunately again, some Labradors may have inherited eye defects that could lead to vision loss. Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA) is a disease in which blindness will gradually develop. Subtle changes in the appearance of the retina (part of the inside of the eye) can indicate that tendency. Retinal Dysplasia is generally a non-progressive eye disease that causes varying degrees of poor eyesight, but rarely total blindness. Juvenile Cataracts are spots of abnormal coloration deep within the lens. They generally do not affect vision and are non-progressive. Only veterinarians with special training (Ophthalmologists) and special interests in eye diseases may be able to give an authoritative opinion on the health of the eyes of your puppy's parents.
- 5) If interested, does this puppy have show, field, hunting, or obedience potential? Even with outstanding pedigrees, not every puppy will have the qualities sought after in the show ring, field or obedience ring. If you're not sure, ask other breeders for opinions and advice. Check pedigrees for the blending of lines that will produce the best possible animal. Members of the Labrador Retriever Club will be happy to assist you in these areas if you ask.

Information you should know about the puppy you've selected:

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- 1) Ask the breeder for a certificate of vaccination stating what vaccines it has already received and when, and by whom. For adequate protection, puppies need a series of vaccinations.

Check with your own veterinarian for advice.

- 2) If the puppy was dewormed, what was the drug used and when was it given? If the puppy was not dewormed, was a fecal exam done? The breeder can answer whether or not the dam or other litters have had problems with worms.
- 3) What type and brand of food, how much and how often? The breeder will usually recommend a food and a feeding program. It is important not to over-feed, nor under-feed a growing puppy.
- 4) Heartworm is spread from dog to dog by mosquitoes. The puppy should be placed on a heartworm preventative at an early age, and maintained on this medication each year throughout the mosquito season.*
- 5) What are the terms of the guarantee (if any)? Have your new puppy examined by your veterinarian as soon as possible after you pick it up to assure its good health. Books are excellent sources of information for new or aspiring Labrador Retriever owners.

* The Central Ohio Labrador Retriever Club suggests you discuss with your veterinarian keeping your dog on heartworm medication throughout the year.

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HEALTH PROBLEMS

We have cautioned against purchasing puppies that have congenital or hereditary health problems. Many breeds are subject to hereditary disease, and unfortunately, the Labrador is no exception. The following list is non all-inclusive, nor is it intended to provide

means of diagnosing the heredity problems that may be encountered.

Hip Dysplasia: This term refers to malformation of the hip joints. It is an inherited disease and often cannot be detected until the puppy is several months or older and the only positive means of determination is through X-ray examination. It causes lameness of varying degrees ranging from a mild arthritic condition to total incapacity. Since it is an inherited trait, dysplastic dogs should never be used for breeding. Reputable breeders have their dogs X-rayed by local veterinarians who send the films to the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) at the University of Missouri for evaluation. The OFA issues certificates to dogs that pass their examination. Dysplastic dogs, in less severe cases, may still be useful pets or hunting companions.

Diseases of the Eye: Most of these are hereditary disorders and due to the seriousness of some of the effects, all breeding stock should be examined by a Board Certified Veterinary Ophthalmologist before being used for breeding. Most veterinarians include a regular eye examination when the dog receives its annual physical examination and booster inoculations. However, if an eye problem is evident, your veterinarian will probably refer you to an ophthalmologist.

Epilepsy: There is lots of evidence that this is a hereditary problem. Seizures may also result from a variety of other problems including tumors, infection, improper diet, trauma and other internal factors. Your veterinarian may recommend medication that will correct the problem. However, it is not advisable to breed animals that display seizures.

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BREEDING

About one-fourth of our inquiries arise from people wanting to breed their females (or males) and seeking a suitable mate in their geographical area. As a general rule, if

you are not already acquainted with the Labrador people and dogs in your area, you probably should not consider breeding your animal until you have gained more knowledge and experience with the breed.

First, let us consider the person owning a male dog that wants him "studded". Forget it. Unless he is a Champion (either bench or field) no one will be interested. And, if you have shown your dog or run him in the field, or if he shows promise or potential, people will come to you seeking stud service. Also, once a dog has been bred, he often loses his house manners. This is not an endearing trait.

Breeding dogs is not for everyone – especially beginners in the breed. First, you must be dedicated to the breed and, if you cannot fulfill the guidelines set forth for an acceptable breeder, maybe you should plan to purchase rather than breed.

Let's examine some of the problems with breeding:

1) Having puppies is a lot of hard work. The older they become, the more they eat (at least three times a day), the dirtier they get and become more of an effort to keep clean, and the harder they are to take care of.

2) Whelping the dam can present a problem. Sometimes, caesarian section is the only means of delivery and if you are not cognizant of the problems encountered at the time of birth, the dam or puppies can become ill or possibly die.

3) You will probably lose money on the endeavor. If you have the mistaken idea that raising a litter will help you recover your investment, forget it. Ask yourself the question, "Who will buy the puppies?" If you don't know the answer before the female is bred, the puppies (sometimes as many as 10 or 12) will remain unsold for a long, long time.

4) Stud service can be expensive. The fee for a proven sire, on that is a champion and has been certified free of congenital health defects can be \$500 or more. Considering the veterinary expenses, feeding and care of

puppies up to time of sale, and incidental expenses, it is possible that you could have \$1500 invested before a single puppy is sold. Hardly a moneymaking proposition!

5) Other important considerations include your facilities for whelping and raising a litter of puppies, the amount of time and effort you may have to devote to the project and your own expertise and experience – puppies do not raise themselves.

6) We have left the most important consideration to last. Is your female really worth breeding from a conformational, rather than an emotional perspective? Is she a champion or does she show promise as a field dog, has she been certified free from inheritable problems (hip dysplasia, PRA, etc)? Is she well bred (as ascertained by careful examination of her pedigree)? Finally, and most importantly, what is her disposition?

Know the Facts BEFORE Breeding Your Dog

*(Written by Drs. Tom & Bonnie Wilcox, Preemption, IL
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Quality: AKC registration is NOT an indication of quality. Most dogs, even purebred, should not be bred. Many dogs, though wonderful pets, have defects of structure, personality or health that should not be perpetuated. Breeding animals should be proven free of these defects BEFORE starting on a reproductive career. Breeding should only be done with the goal of IMPROVEMENT – and honest attempt to create puppies better than their parents. Ignorance is no excuse – once you have created a life, you can't take it back, even if blind, crippled, or a canine psychopath.

Cost: Dog breeding is NOT a moneymaking proposition, if done correctly. Health care and shots, diagnosis of problems and proof of quality, extra food, facilities, stud fees, advertising, etc. are all costly and must be paid BEFORE the pups can be sold. An unexpected Cesarean or emergency intensive care for a sick pup will make a

break-even litter become a big liability – and this is IF you can sell the pups.

Sales: First-time breeders have no reputation and no referrals to help them find buyers. Previous promises of “I want a dog just like yours” evaporated. Consider the time and expense of caring for pups that may not sell until four months, eight months or more. What WOULD you do if your pups did not sell? Send them to the pound? Dump them in the country? Veteran breeders with a good reputation often don't consider a breeding unless they have cash deposits in advance for an average-sized litter.

Joy of Birth: If you're doing it for the children's education, remember the whelping may be at 3AM or at the vet's on the surgery table. Even if the kiddies are present, they may get a chance to see the birth of a monster or a mummy, or watch the bitch scream and bite you as you attempt to deliver a pup that is half out and too large. Some bitches are not natural mothers and either ignore or savage their whelps. Bitches can have severe delivery problems or even die in whelp, pups can be born dead or with gross deformities that require euthanasia. Of course there can be joy, but if you can't deal with the possibility of tragedy, don't start.

Time: Veteran breeders of quality dogs state they spend well over 130 hours of labor in raising an average litter. That is over two hours per day, every day! The bitch CANNOT be left alone while whelping and only for short period for the first few days after. Be prepared for days off work and sleepless nights. Even after delivery, mom needs care and feeding, puppies need daily checking, weighing and socialization. Later, grooming and training, and the whelping box needs lots of cleaning. More hours are spent doing paperwork, pedigrees and interviewing buyers. If you have any abnormal conditions, such as sick puppies or a bitch who can't or won't care for her babies, count on double that time. If you can't provide the time you will either have dead pups or poor ones that are bad tempered, antisocial, dirty and/or sickly; hardly a buyer's delight.

Humane Responsibilities: It's midnight – do you know where your puppies are? There are THREE AND A HALF MILLION unwanted dogs put to death in pounds in this country each year, with millions more dying homeless and unwanted through starvation, disease, automobiles, abuse, etc. Nearly a quarter of the victims of this unspeakable tragedy are purebred dogs "with papers". The breeder who created a life is responsible for that life. Will you carefully screen potential buyers? Or will you just take the money and not worry if the puppy is chained in a junk yard all of its life or runs in the street to be killed? Will you turn down a sale to irresponsible owners? Or will you say "yes" and not think about the puppy you held and loved now having a litter of mongrels every time she comes in heat, which fills the pounds with more statistics. Would you be prepared to take a grown puppy if the owners can no longer care for it? Or can you live with the thought that the baby you helped bring into the world will be destroyed at the pound?

*Labrador Retriever Club, Inc.
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STANDARD OF THE BREED FOR THE LABRADOR RETRIEVER

The Labrador Retriever is a strongly built, medium-sized, short-coupled, dog possessing a sound, athletic, well-balanced conformation that enables it to function as a retrieving gun dog; the substance and soundness to hunt waterfowl or upland game for long hours under difficult conditions; the character and quality to win in the show ring; and the temperament to be a family companion. Physical features and mental characteristics should denote a dog bred to perform as an efficient Retriever of game with a stable temperament suitable for a variety of pursuits beyond the hunting environment.

The most distinguishing characteristics of the Labrador Retriever are its short, dense, weather resistant coat; an "otter" tail; a clean-cut head with broad back skull and moderate stop; powerful jaws; and its "kind," friendly

eyes, expressing character, intelligence and good temperament.

Above all, a Labrador Retriever must be well balanced, enabling it to move in the show ring or work in the field with little or no effort. The typical Labrador possesses style and quality without over refinement, and substance without lumber or cloddiness. The Labrador is bred primarily as a working gun dog; structure and soundness are of great importance.

Size, Proportion and Substance

Size--The height at the withers for a dog is 22½ to 24½ inches; for a bitch is 21½ to 23½ inches. Any variance greater than ½ inch above or below these heights is a disqualification. Approximate weight of dogs and bitches in working condition: dogs 65 to 80 pounds; bitches 55 to 70 pounds. The minimum height ranges set forth in the paragraph above shall not apply to dogs or bitches under twelve months of age.

Proportion--Short-coupled; length from the point of the shoulder to the point of the rump is equal to or slightly longer than the distance from the withers to the ground. Distance from the elbow to the ground should be equal to one half of the height at the withers. The brisket should extend to the elbows, but not perceptibly deeper. The body must be of sufficient length to permit a straight, free and efficient stride; but the dog should never appear low and long or tall and leggy in outline. **Substance**--Substance and bone proportionate to the overall dog. Light, "weedy" individuals are definitely incorrect; equally objectionable are cloddy lumbering specimens. Labrador Retrievers shall be shown in working condition well-muscled and without excess fat.

Head

Skull--The skull should be wide; well developed but without exaggeration. The skull and foreface should be on parallel planes and of approximately equal length. There should be a moderate stop--the brow

slightly pronounced so that the skull is not absolutely in a straight line with the nose. The brow ridges aid in defining the stop. The head should be clean-cut and free from fleshy cheeks; the bony structure of the skull chiseled beneath the eye with no prominence in the cheek. The skull may show some median line; the occipital bone is not conspicuous in mature dogs. Lips should not be squared off or pendulous, but fall away in a curve toward the throat. A wedge-shape head, or a head long and narrow in muzzle and back skull is incorrect as are massive, cheeky heads. The jaws are powerful and free from snippiness-- the muzzle neither long and narrow nor short and stubby. *Nose*--The nose should be wide and the nostrils well-developed. The nose should be black on black or yellow dogs, and brown on chocolates. Nose color fading to a lighter shade is not a fault. A thoroughly pink nose or one lacking in any pigment is a disqualification. *Teeth*--The teeth should be strong and regular with a scissors bite; the lower teeth just behind, but touching the inner side of the upper incisors. A level bite is acceptable, but not desirable. Undershot, overshot, or misaligned teeth are serious faults. Full dentition is preferred. Missing molars or pre-molars are serious faults. *Ears*--The ears should hang moderately close to the head, set rather far back, and somewhat low on the skull; slightly above eye level. Ears should not be large and heavy, but in proportion with the skull and reach to the inside of the eye when pulled forward. *Eyes*--Kind, friendly eyes imparting good temperament, intelligence and alertness are a hallmark of the breed. They should be of medium size, set well apart, and neither protruding nor deep set. Eye color should be brown in black and yellow Labradors, and brown or hazel in chocolates. Black, or yellow eyes give a harsh expression and are undesirable. Small eyes, set close together or round prominent eyes are not typical of the breed. Eye rims are black in black and yellow Labradors; and brown in chocolates. Eye rims without pigmentation is a disqualification.

Neck, Topline, Body and Tail

Neck--The neck should be of proper length to allow the dog to retrieve game easily. It should be muscular and free from throatiness. The neck should rise strongly from the shoulders with a moderate arch. A short, thick neck or a "ewe" neck is incorrect.

Topline--The back is strong and the topline is level from the withers to the croup when standing or moving. However, the loin should show evidence of flexibility for athletic endeavor.

Body--The Labrador should be short-coupled, with good spring of ribs tapering to a moderately wide chest. The Labrador should not be narrow chested; giving the appearance of hollowness between the front legs, nor should it have a wide spreading, bulldog-like front. Correct chest conformation will result in tapering between the front legs that allows unrestricted forelimb movement. Chest breadth that is either too wide or too narrow for efficient movement and stamina is incorrect. Slab-sided individuals are not typical of the breed; equally objectionable are rotund or barrel chested specimens. The underline is almost straight, with little or no tuck-up in mature animals. Loins should be short, wide and strong; extending to well developed, powerful hindquarters. When viewed from the side, the Labrador Retriever shows a well-developed, but not exaggerated forechest.

Tail--The tail is a distinguishing feature of the breed. It should be very thick at the base, gradually tapering toward the tip, of medium length, and extending no longer than to the hock. The tail should be free from feathering and clothed thickly all around with the Labrador's short, dense coat, thus having that peculiar rounded appearance that has been described as the "otter" tail. The tail should follow the topline in repose or when in motion. It may be carried gaily, but should not curl over the back. Extremely short tails or long thin tails are serious faults. The tail completes the balance of the Labrador by giving it a flowing line from the top of the

head to the tip of the tail. Docking or otherwise altering the length or natural carriage of the tail is a disqualification.

Forequarters

Forequarters should be muscular, well coordinated and balanced with the hindquarters. *Shoulders*--The shoulders are well laid-back, long and sloping, forming an angle with the upper arm of approximately 90 degrees that permits the dog to move his forelegs in an easy manner with strong forward reach. Ideally, the length of the shoulder blade should equal the length of the upper arm. Straight shoulder blades, short upper arms or heavily muscled or loaded shoulders, all restricting free movement, are incorrect. *Front Legs*--When viewed from the front, the legs should be straight with good strong bone. Too much bone is as undesirable as too little bone, and short legged, heavy boned individuals are not typical of the breed. Viewed from the side, the elbows should be directly under the withers, and the front legs should be perpendicular to the ground and well under the body. The elbows should be close to the ribs without looseness. Tied-in elbows or being "out at the elbows" interfere with free movement and are serious faults. Pasterns should be strong and short and should slope slightly from the perpendicular line of the leg. Feet are strong and compact, with well-arched toes and well-developed pads. Dew claws may be removed. Splayed feet, hare feet, knuckling over, or feet turning in or out are serious faults.

Hindquarters

The Labrador's hindquarters are broad, muscular and well-developed from the hip to the hock with well-turned stifles and strong short hocks. Viewed from the rear, the hind legs are straight and parallel. Viewed from the side, the angulation of the rear legs is in balance with the front. The hind legs are strongly boned, muscled with moderate angulation at the stifle, and powerful, clearly defined thighs. The stifle is strong and there is no slippage of the patellae while in motion

or when standing. The hock joints are strong, well let down and do not slip or hyper-extend while in motion or when standing. Angulation of both stifle and hock joint is such as to achieve the optimal balance of drive and traction. When standing the rear toes are only slightly behind the point of the rump. Over angulation produces a sloping topline not typical of the breed. Feet are strong and compact, with well-arched toes and well-developed pads. Cow-hocks, spread hocks, sickle hocks and over-angulation are serious structural defects and are to be faulted.

Coat

The coat is a distinctive feature of the Labrador Retriever. It should be short, straight and very dense, giving a fairly hard feeling to the hand. The Labrador should have a soft, weather-resistant undercoat that provides protection from water, cold and all types of ground cover. A slight wave down the back is permissible. Woolly coats, soft silky coats, and sparse slick coats are not typical of the breed, and should be severely penalized.

Color

The Labrador Retriever coat colors are black, yellow and chocolate. Any other color or a combination of colors is a disqualification. A small white spot on the chest is permissible, but not desirable. White hairs from aging or scarring are not to be misinterpreted as brindling. *Black*--Blacks are all black. A black with brindle markings or a black with tan markings is a disqualification. *Yellow*--Yellows may range in color from fox-red to light cream, with variations in shading on the ears, back, and underparts of the dog. *Chocolate*--Chocolates can vary in shade from light to dark chocolate. Chocolate with brindle or tan markings is a disqualification.

Movement

Movement of the Labrador Retriever should be free and effortless. When watching a dog move toward oneself, there should be no sign of elbows out. Rather, the elbows should be

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held neatly to the body with the legs not too close together. Moving straight forward without pacing or weaving, the legs should form straight lines, with all parts moving in the same plane. Upon viewing the dog from the rear, one should have the impression that the hind legs move as nearly as possible in a parallel line with the front legs. The hocks should do their full share of the work, flexing well, giving the appearance of power and strength. When viewed from the side, the shoulders should move freely and effortlessly, and the foreleg should reach forward close to the ground with extension. A short, choppy movement or high knee action indicates a straight shoulder; paddling indicates long, weak pasterns; and a short, stilted rear gait indicates a straight rear assembly; all are serious faults. Movement faults interfering with performance including weaving; side-winding; crossing over; high knee action; paddling; and short, choppy movement, should be severely penalized.

Temperament

True Labrador Retriever temperament is as much a hallmark of the breed as the "otter" tail. The ideal disposition is one of a kindly, outgoing, tractable nature; eager to please and non-aggressive towards man or animal. The Labrador has much that appeals to people; his gentle ways, intelligence and adaptability make him an ideal dog. Aggressiveness towards humans or other animals, or any evidence of shyness in an adult should be severely penalized.

Disqualifications

1. *Any deviation from the height prescribed in the Standard.*
2. *A thoroughly pink nose or one lacking in any pigment.*
3. *Eye rims without pigment.*
4. *Docking or otherwise altering the length or natural carriage of the tail.*
5. *Any other color or a combination of colors other than black, yellow or chocolate as described in the Standard.*

A few books we recommend:

"This is The Labrador Retriever" by Dorothy Howe

"The New Complete Labrador Retriever" by Helen Warwick

"The Book of The Labrador Retriever" by Anna Katherine Nicholas

"Training Your Retriever" by James Lamb Free

"Water Dog" by Richard Wolters

"Gun Dog" by Richard Wolters

"The Complete Dog Book" by AKC (Howell Book House)

"Mother Knows Best – Training Your Dog The Natural Way" by Carol Lea Benjamin

CRATE TRAINING YOUR LABRADOR RETRIEVER PUPPY

“Far too many potentially good pets are misunderstood, unfairly punished/abused, isolated, or simply gotten rid of by otherwise kind and well-meaning owners who are unable to prevent, control, or live with common problem behavior of puppies and young adult dogs. The correct use of a dog crate could give many of these innocent animals the chance they need – and deserve – to spend their lives as the appreciated pets of a satisfied owner.”

– Nicki Meyer, nationally recognized authority on crate/cage training

Introduction

Simply put, crate training is the very best means of establishing proper behavior control for your newly purchased pet. Fortunately, Labradors in general are a very responsive breed, therefore, they “take-to” crate training very rapidly. Most experienced breeders will strongly recommend crate training, thus, these individuals serve as an excellent source of additional information.

Initial Response

It is not uncommon for a new pet owner to reject the concept of crate training as it appears the animal is being “put in jail.” However, from the pet’s perspective, the crate represents a sanctuary, a place of his/her own, a means of getting away, thus saying, it brings out one of the dog’s most basic instinct, that of establishing a den, his/her own private home. This becomes quite obvious within a very short period of proper crate training.

Positive Aspects

There are many positive aspects which are extremely beneficial to both you as a new owner and to the pet itself. The following outlines a few of these benefits:

Housebreaking: Crate training represents one of the fastest, least traumatic and most complete methods of housebreaking.

Chew Prevention: When you are away from home, a crated animal will not chew your furniture or destroy other property.

Controlled Environment: A crated dog allows many house guests to be more comfortable if they are not dog-oriented people.

Security to the Pet: When your pet is crated, you can be assured he/she is safe regardless of where you are at any given time.

Traveling: When traveling, you can crate your pet in the vehicle which allows for a safer driving situation. Also, if staying overnight at a strange location, crating your pet will provide him/her its own home, plus appease your host whether a friend or a hotel/motel.

Negative Aspects

The only negatives associated with crating are:

- (1) The initial cost of a crate
- (2) The psychological effect it has on you, the pet owner

Crates of the proper size for Labradors will cost somewhere between \$70.00 and \$120.00 (more on crates later). With respect to the second negative, you have to give the training a proper chance. It is virtually guaranteed that in a short order, you will be stating that your pet loves his/her crate.

Crates and Crating Tips

Size of Crate: When considering the size, there are two major factors. One is with respect to size of an adult Labrador and the other is related to early puppy training/housebreaking. The concept of housebreaking a puppy in a crate is that animals do not like to soil their home (den). Therefore, a smaller crate is best for puppies, one that is approximately one-half to two-thirds the floor space as that needed for an adult animal. It is possible to partition a large adult size crate for training and as the puppy grows, enlarge the space until it reaches adult size. This method offers versatility in a single cage.

Placement of the Crate: It is advisable to place the crate near an active area such as a family room or a kitchen. This allows you and the pet to interact during the training period.

Time Period for Training: The time aspect of training constitutes a lot of a common sense with respect to the body functions of a puppy versus that of an adult animal. Generally speaking, with a new puppy, you start out with short intervals of crating, 15-30 minutes, and over a period of a few months, your pet could be in a crate for six (6) hours or so. By knowing puppy habits, a puppy can be crate trained within a week with an occasional accident thereafter. The exception to the above time frame is during the night training where the puppy is crated at bedtime and out the first thing in the morning when other family members arise.

What to Expect: First, you should have a crate prior to purchasing your Labrador puppy. The first night you place the puppy in the crate, it will whimper and cry. This response is not unexpected as he/she is alone for the first time in its short life. This is particularly true the first night, but sometimes occurs several times. Your response to this is your decision, however, if you respond by going to the puppy and letting it out to eliminate or console it, each time you are placing yourself on his/her schedule. It is best to let them cry and soil in their crate, which they don't like, which is part of the training. To help in this regard, take the puppy outside just prior to going to bed and then take the puppy outside immediately after rising each morning. The puppy will learn very quickly to wait for you to take it outside, thus the house/crate breaking becomes successful.

Leave the door on the crate open during the day even when your pet is not confined. You'll be surprised how frequently he/she enters the crate to play or sleep.

Items in the Crate: Generally speaking, you should not leave food or water in the crate, especially during the early training phases. You can feed and water in the crate, but remove both immediately after the pup eats and drinks. Chew toys and such are okay during the waking hours, but should be removed at night. Placing newspapers on the floor during early training will help in cleaning the crate, however it will somewhat "paper train" your new puppy. The way to offset this minor problem is to take the puppy outside immediately after it awakens from a nap as stated early, and first thing in the morning. When the pet becomes fairly well house/crate broken, you can put a towel, rag, or piece of personal clothing in the crate for comfort provided the puppy does not chew this item (swallowing shredded pieces of cloth or similar materials can cause serious intestinal blockage and require immediate emergency surgery). It is not advisable to leave any type of collar on the animal when crated. These can get hung up and seriously injure your pet.

Types of Crates: There are several types of crates available: the open wire mesh type, plastic/fiberglass airline type crates and some all metal with smaller openings. The general preference is the wire mesh type cage which allows your pet to view its surrounds plus offers the best ventilation. These can be made private by draping a sheet over part of the crate if so desired. Airline type crates and semi-solid crates are okay for trained older animals, providing other ventilation is adequate. Some wire mesh cages also come in fold-up styles which allows you to carry them as a suitcase. Also, many wire mesh cages are plastic or chrome coated to keep your animal from becoming stained. Most cages will offer a drop pan for additional cleaning benefits.

Sources of Crates

1. Local pet supply stores
2. Most pet supply catalogs

Consult with the breeder for additional sources.

In Conclusion

Crate training is not punishment, nor should it be used as such. It is truly an ideal means to prevent the many undesirable puppy behavioral traits which ultimately lead to an unhappy relationship between your pet and yourself. As Nicki Meyer states, "a secure dog is a happy dog, use a crate, you'll be glad you did and so will your dog".