

A GUIDE TO HELP YOU PURCHASE YOUR LABRADOR RETRIEVER



The Basics

Make sure you purchase your puppy from a registered breeder, this is a person who is registered with the canine controlling body in their State (i.e. Dogs ACT, Dogs NSW, Dogs SA, Dogs Tas, Dogs Vic, Dogs Qld or Dogs West). All puppies bred by registered breeders have had their parents x-rayed and scored for hip and elbow dysplasia, registered breeders are generally happy to allow you to see or get copies of any health screening tests they have had done on their breeding stock (the parents of your puppy).

Pet shops and unregistered breeders do *not* have to go through this process. Buying from a registered breeding also means you have a continuing relationship with your breeder, they are generally there to help you as you raise your pup and turns into a beautiful adult.

Pet shops will sometimes give you a 14 to 30 day guarantee (if you are lucky), have no idea who the parents are of the pups or any health issues that they may be affected by.

Labrador Retrievers are not a cross of a Labrador and a Golden Retriever, they are a breed all of their own – just as Golden Retrievers are, Curly Coat Retrievers are, Flat Coat

Retrievers are and Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retrievers are (try saying that one fast!). Each has their own unique characteristics and were bred for different purposes, the only thing they really have in common is the last part of the name “Retriever” and that are all breeds within what we call in Australia the **Gundog group**.



Labrador Retrievers come in three colours, black, yellow and chocolate. Yellow may range from cream through to a really dark red called fox red (not often seen in Australia). **Silver or charcoal** are **not pure bred** Labrador Retriever colours and should be avoided.

If you are looking to bring a Labrador Retriever Puppy into your family you should do your research. You will find a number of sources including:

- Registered Breeder
- Unregistered Breeder

- Breeders for Profit
- Pet Shop
- Newspapers
- Internet

Labrador Retrievers, along with many other breeds have a history of hereditary diseases such as **Hip and Elbow Dysplasia**, and **Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA)**. Members of the Labrador Retriever Clubs around Australia have worked hard over many years to reduce the incidence of these diseases.

List of Questions to ask

This is not always the case with all other Labrador Breeders, so we are setting out a list of questions that you can ask of the breeder you are considering buying a puppy from:

Q. Have the mum and dad of the litter been screened for Hip & Elbow Dysplasia?

If the breeder tells you that it is not necessary, then we advise you look elsewhere. A litter cannot be registered with any of the canine controlling bodies (who are the births, deaths and marriages department for dogs) unless the breeder of both mum and dad has had their hips and elbows x-rayed and scored by a veterinary radiologist and the scores submitted to the canine controlling body. To improve the health of the Labrador Retriever breed it is now a mandatory requirement for breeders to have the parents of all litters whelped on or after

*1st October 2003 radiographed and assessed for the diseases Hip & Elbow Dysplasia as a prerequisite to registration of any litter. The end result of this requirement a far better chance of purchasing a sound and healthy puppy – **but it is absolutely no guarantee.***

Q. Have the mum and dad of the litter been screened for other health conditions, i.e. annual eye check, DNA for PRA, EIC.

If the breeder tells you that it is not necessary, then we advise you look elsewhere. While breeders can now get a DNA test done for PRA (progressive retinal atrophy), there are a number of other eye conditions that Labrador Retrievers (or any dog) can get and it is important that they are checked annual, sort of like our annual health check. These conditions include:

- **Focal or multi-focal retinal dysplasia** refers to small folds within the retinal tissue, either singularly or multiply. These may become less pronounced as the dog approaches maturity, but may cause blind spots in the dog's vision.
- **Geographic retinal dysplasia** lesions appear to be horseshoe-shaped or irregularly shaped, and may be present either instead of or alongside of folds in the retinal tissue. While focal or multi-focal folds may lessen or disappear as the dog ages, geographic retinal lesions will not. This type of retinal dysplasia results in visual impairment and possible blindness.
- The most severe form of the condition is **complete retinal dysplasia** accompanied with detachment, which causes blindness and may potentially be accompanied by a range of secondary eye problems such as cataract or glaucoma.

- A **cataract** is a clouding of the lens inside the eye and is the most common cause of blindness in dogs. Cataracts can be caused by injuries or diabetes, but a lot of cataracts in dogs may be inherited. Any opacity in the lens is called a cataract; very small spots do not significantly affect vision. However, most cataracts will progress, and ultimately cause blindness. The lens is located behind the coloured iris; thus when a cataract occurs, the pupil may appear white. Vision through a mature cataract is like looking through white painted glass.

Q. Can I see the Parents Certificates for Hip & Elbow Dysplasia and current eye clearances?

If the breeder tells you that it is not necessary or they don't have them, then we advise you look elsewhere.

Q. Are you a member of your State's canine controlling body (Dogs SA, Dogs NSW, Dogs Qld, Dogs Victoria, Dogs WA, Dogs NT, Dogs ACT or Dogs Tasmania) and bound by their Code of Ethics?

The Code of Ethics can be found on the website for your State's controlling body.

Q. Do you comply with Government Breeding Codes if there is one in force in your State?

New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland all have Government Breeding Codes, you can find them through your State Government.

Q Can I see the mother with the puppies?

Beware of the breeder who will not let you do this or wants to meet you with the puppy away from their kennels. There are some breeders who raise their puppies in substandard conditions and whose breeding bitches are in poor condition from being mated each time they come on heat, which is not allowed under the ANKC Code of Ethics. The ANKC (Australian National Kennel Council) is like the Federal Government of the dog world, you can find their website at www.ankc.org.au.

Q Will my puppy have Registration Papers?

All litters should be registered with the controlling body of the State in which they were born.

*This organisation will supply the original Registered Pedigree document. Each State's canine controlling body provide two types of Registration Papers, **Main Register** or **Limited Register**. This certificate is your pup's birth certificate and will prove that your puppy is a pedigree purebred dog.*

Beware of the breeder who only wants to give you a printed pedigree without a controlling body's Registration Number.

Do not confuse pedigree papers with Microchip papers or vaccination certificate.

*Registration papers are stamped with the **ANKC Logo**, Limited Register papers will have the words "Limited Register" printed on the front. Dogs which are registered on the Main Register are not subject to any limitation of eligibility in respect to activities conducted under the rules, such as Conformations shows, Retrieving Trials, Obedience Trials, Tracking Trials or being used for Breeding.*

Dogs that are registered in the Limited Register may participate in events such as Obedience Trials, Agility Trials, Field Trials, Endurance Tests, Tracking Trials, (including Sweepstakes associated with such events), but are not to be entered into a Conformation Show, used in Breeding or be issued with an Export Certificate.

If you need to know more, ask the breeder questions in regards to the puppy's registration to ensure you understand the details of the register. It pays to be aware of these things.

However, if your puppy will be 'a member of the family' it won't matter in the slightest what register your puppy is on.

Q Will my puppy be micro chipped and will that microchip be registered with a recognised microchip registry in Australia?

All puppies are required to be micro chipped before registration with the State canine controlling body. Micro chipping is a means of permanent positive identification.

Puppies are usually micro chipped at around 6-8 weeks, with the microchip being placed under the skin between the shoulder blades.

It is the responsibility of the breeder to ensure that the microchip details of the puppy are recorded on a recognised Registry within Australia.

If you do not get satisfactory answers to your questions you may be buying a puppy that will, in time, cause you heartbreak and large veterinary bills.

Purchase Price

Everyone loves a bargain, but beware of the "cheap" puppy sold by 'backyard' breeders and puppies sold for high prices through Pet Shops that 'Look like a Labrador'. Puppies sold by reputable breeders may cost a little more in some cases. However, the mother will have been fed properly and puppies will have been wormed correctly, immunised temporarily and weaned with the necessary diet that is so important for growing puppies.

No puppy should leave the 'nest' before the age of 8 weeks at a minimum. Any puppy breeders' who foist poor pups at an earlier age on the public are studying their pockets, not the welfare of the litter. If a puppy is sold less than 8 weeks of age it represents a serious breach of the ANKC Code of Ethics and should be reported to your State's canine controlling body.

Type

A puppy should have a fairly broad head with medium ears hanging close to the head. Any sign of the ears sticking out or up indicate crossbred ancestry. The puppy's body should be short and solid with a dense coat and thick tail. Legs should be sturdy. The overall appearance should be of a chunky thick-coated (but not overweight) puppy, bursting with vitality. However as you can imagine puppies do sleep! And this sleep period is an important time for growing puppies.

To sum up: When choosing a puppy from a breeder ask questions, look around, meet the Sire and Dam (if possible) and spend some time with the litter. Remember your puppy will be a 'family member' for around 12 + years and won't be 'here today, gone tomorrow'.

Ensure you are prepared for your new puppy's arrival at home i.e. bedding, bowls, health care equipment, food (as advised by the breeder) and an area for your puppy to play and exercise.

When taking your puppy home you should have from the breeder: instructions for feeding and general care, knowledge of worming done and preparation used, an immunization certificate for temporary needle (permanent needles needed at approximately 12 and 16 weeks).

Do not purchase a puppy if it has any of these signs:

- Thin bony body, pinched in face;
- Distended stomach;
- Starey coat (i.e. hair standing out instead of lying flat), or
- Practically white gums.

These signs indicate that the puppy may not have been wormed. Additionally, do not buy a puppy which has fleas, runny eyes, smelly ear canals, or whose surroundings are not absolutely clean. Find a breeder who you feel comfortable with, don't just buy a puppy to "save" it from a bad situation, you could be buying yourself a very expensive family addition.

We hope this information has been of some help to you in choosing a good, healthy puppy, and that you in turn will do all in your power to help keep up the high standard of our Labradors.

Thank you to both the Labrador Retriever Club of New South Wales and the Labrador Retriever Club of Queensland for the majority of information contained in this guide.

Labrador Retriever Clubs around Australia

- National Labrador Retriever Breed Council:
<http://www.nationallabradorretrieverbreedcouncilaustralia.com/default.asp>
- Labrador Retriever Club of New South Wales:
www.labradorclubnsw.com
- Labrador Retriever Club of Queensland (Inc):
www.labradorclubqld.com
- Labrador Retriever Club of South Australia (Inc):
www.salabclub.com.au
- Labrador Retriever Club of Victoria (Inc):
www.labvic.org.au
- Labrador Retriever Club of Western Australia (Inc):
www.labradorclubofwa.com