Evaluation Primer

Evaluations are performed on litters to identify the breed traits from each puppy in the litter. There is a time constraint for evaluating Labrador puppies that are limited to the age of 7 ½ weeks old to no more than 8 ½ weeks old.

Anything before 7 ½ weeks old, catches the puppies not yet developed out where some are not even running fully…………………..past the 8 ½ weeks old mark, catches them in the stretching out period where legs start to extend……………….so optimally the best time is that 6 to 7 day period where Lab puppies seem to be little replicas of what they ‘should’ grow into as adults.

A thorough knowledge of the Labrador breed standard is a must to fully comprehend the process involved since each component of the puppy will be covered as to whether it conforms to the dictums of the breed or if not, how far the deviations are from the stated breed trait according to that ‘blueprint’ for the breed.

The further away a component is from the description set forth in the official Labrador Retriever Breed Standard, the further away that individual puppy will be from the preferred breed type to the point that some deviations will lead to ‘flaws’……………….further deviations will become ‘faults’ and then there are those deviations so far away from what it should be that the standard describes those a ‘serious structural defects’.

For instance: **Cowhocks, spread hocks, sickle hocks and over-angulation are *serious structural defects* and are to be faulted.** (the preceding copied right from the Labrador Breed Standard)

So we have **CORRECT**>>>>>>>>>>FLAWS>>>>>>>>>>>FAULTS>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>DEFECTS!>>>>>>>>>>>DQs

Some dogs that make it to the show arena may have some slight FLAWS………….hopefully not too serious FAULTS and certainly NO DEFECTS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! DQ’s are automatically not evaluated!

During the evaluation, our evaluation, a puppy identified with a DQ or a SERIOUS STRUCTURAL DEFECT, will be taken off the table and its evaluation for show purpose will terminate. I would not invest my time, energy and money on a puppy with a SERIOUS STRUCTURAL DEFECT, so I won’t lend my name as an evaluator on such a prospect for someone else to take the chance with.

In my opinion, this is the only way that an evaluation for the betterment of the breed is worthy! Anything else is a detriment to the breed.

**The actual evaluation!**

**#1 Position** Breed Type – Setting the puppy up with a side profile to determine the ‘whole look’ of the puppy. We are looking for the correct OUTLINE of the breed! There are descriptives, ratios, dimensions, lengths, heights, angles, complementary components, and assemblies………………..all of these coming together as described by the breed standard that depicts that breed as being unique for that breed and not like any other breed of dog.

Note: If ANYTHING looks off…………..calls attention……………..reminds you of another breed during this view……………..then something is not right with that individual puppy and depending on the deviation for the described correct look……………slight deviations, moderate deviations and severe deviations each will take away from the show-worthiness of that puppy.

\*Several visuals here would be the correct height at the shoulders that corresponds to the correct length………..neck position………topline/tail…………….front assembly………….rear assembly

**\*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 neck should rise strongly from the shoulders with a moderate arch.**

**\*Topline-The back is strong and the topline is level from the withers to the croup when standing or moving. 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.**

**\*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. 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.**

\***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 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. When standing the rear toes are only slightly behind the point of the rump.**

**#2 Position** After covering the above side view of the puppy, the puppy will then be turned forward to see the front of the dog.

**\* Front-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 allow 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 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.**

**\*Head: Skull-The skull should be wide; well developed but without exaggeration. The skull and fore face 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 muzzle neither long and narrow nor short and stubby. Ears-The ears should Page 2 of 4 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. 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.**

**#3 Position** After covering the above front view of the puppy, the puppy will then be turned to see the rear assembly of the dog.

**\*Rear Viewed from the rear, the hind legs are straight and parallel. The hock joints are strong, well let down and do not slip or hyper-extend while in motion or when standing. Feet are strong and compact, with well-arched toes and well-developed pads. Cowhocks, 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.**

So, this evaluation will be a Breed Standard Evaluation similar to what we do at Chambray with each and every litter we breed for the betterment of the breed.

In addition, for our litters, we also do a comparison to all of the previous 10 years worth of litters produced. This is a much more complicated procedure that we use to identify the best of the best so that we can offer those puppies to people that want the best and want to be successful showing. Due to the complexity of that process, we won’t have the time nor the setting to go into depth with this evaluations…………………………………AT THIS TIME, which means that I will come up with a special presentation at some chosen dog show weekend in the future where those interested in this very advanced procedure would meet back at the hotel or a set location for me to go into detail with our special evaluations.

\*As a teaser\* Back in 2011, we performed one of our in-depth evaluations on a litter and one puppy scored the highest ever for a puppy from any litter……………the highest score on a particular feature or trait is a 99!

Well, this puppy scored four 99’s.

A 99 for TYPE,

a 99 for FRONT,

a 99 for REAR and

a 99 for HEAD……………………………

the rest were 98’s for TOPLINE, SIDE VIEW FRONT, SIDE VIEW REAR, TAIL & SET, and COAT!

To show you the true value of our evaluations, that puppy turned out to be the only female Labrador ever to win a BEST IN SHOW in Florida………………….#1 Female Labrador USA in 2012……………..one of 52 Silver Grand Champions in the country……………..the Top Champion Producer Dam from Florida with 6-champion ‘produce’………………..Dam of 1 Silver Grand Champion, 3 Bronze Gr Champions, 4 Grand Champions, 1 Champion, and, an FCI Grand Champion. That dog is BIS BBE Silver Grand Ch Chambrays Celestial N Counter JAMS.

So stay tuned for more!