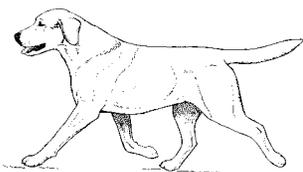


The
Labrador Retriever
Illustrated Standard



Published by The Labrador Retriever Club, Inc.





*This publication is approved by the
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It constitutes the only official illustrated interpretation
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exhibitors and owners of Labrador Retrievers.
In no way does this publication create
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The Labrador Retriever

The Labrador Retriever is a working dog bred to perform retrieving tasks in any kind of weather or environment. It possesses the physical characteristics and temperament that allow it to adapt to many parts of the world and to a variety of work beyond the shooting field.

Origin and Purpose of the Breed

by Dr. & Mrs. Bernard Ziechow

Recent books written about the Labrador Retriever seem to have one thing in common; one chapter is devoted to the early history of the Labrador Retriever—where did he come from?

There are many theories pertaining to his origin, however most everyone agrees that Newfoundland (not Labrador) is the “land from whence he came.” Unfortunately, no one really knows how he got there. In 1882 a native of St. John’s saw small water dogs that he described as “*admirably trained as retrievers in fowling and otherwise useful.*” Since game was abundant on the island and a good hunting dog could provide game to supplement the predominantly fish diet, it is believed the early settlers brought or imported good hunting stock from home. While the dogs were used for many purposes, because of their retrieving instinct, swimming ability and weather-resistant coat, their principal occupation soon became a “work mate” to the fisherman.

From the time they were 10 months old, the Lab pups were assigned a permanent position as a member of the crew of one of the off-shore fishing schooners that was used to ply the Newfoundland waters in search for cod. The method employed to catch cod was by trawl or line. On stormy days, many fish broke off the hooks as the trawl was being brought in. The dogs were taught to jump in the cold, icy water and retrieve the fish. On a particularly rough day, a good dog could retrieve as much as 100 pounds of fish.

The Labrador dogs’ highly developed retrieving instinct and willingness to please did not go unnoticed by the English sportsmen. When organized shooting of upland game became popular with the landed gentry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it became the custom to replace pointers and setters with retrievers. In the early days, a retriever was simply known as a “retriever” and the owners freely inter-bred short-coated, long-coated and curly-coated retrievers. Many dogs were imported from Newfoundland and their owners considered them vastly superior to any other breed.

Colonel Hawker, in 1830, referred to the “St. John’s” breed of water dogs as “*by far the best for any kind of shooting. He is generally black and no bigger than a pointer, very fine in legs with short smooth hair and does not carry his tail so much curled.*”

The 3rd Earl of Malmesbury in a letter written to the 6th Duke of Buccleugh said, “*We always call mine Labrador dogs, and I have kept the breed as pure as I could*



Munden Single, a Labrador Retriever from the early 1900s.

from the first I had . . . the real breed may be known by their having a close coat which turns water off like oil, and, above all, a tail like an otter. Many breeders, realizing the excellent qualities, crossed Labradors with other retrievers. Still, if a Labrador is crossed with some other strain, the Labrador type nearly always predominated and their descendants were most always called Labradors.

“Stonehenge,” the respected 19th century sports writer, said:

“Symmetry and Temperament - the symmetry and elegance of this dog are considerable and should be valued highly. The evidences of a good temper must be regarded with great care since his utility depends on his disposition.”

The greatest number of contemporary dogs are descended from the kennel of the Third Earl of Malmesbury. He gave the Sixth Duke of Buccleugh six dogs in 1870. A few years later the Earl of Malmesbury died and his kennel disappeared, but the pure line that he had pursued continued at the Buccleugh kennels. *All Labradors today have lines that go back to those six dogs.*

The Labrador Retriever was first recognized as a special breed by The Kennel Club (England) on 7 July 1903, and separate breed classes for Labradors were allowed at The Kennel Club Show. On November 3, 1903, Labradors were definitely recognized as a separate breed and on January 3, 1905, they were classified as a sub-variety of retrievers.

Type—the essential combination of characteristics of a breed which distinguish it from other breeds of dogs.

Weather resistant coat—a coat that insulates the dog from rain, ice and water.

Weaving—legs crossing over one another; can apply to front or rear movement.

Weedy—lack bone or substance; light in frame.

Well-balanced—symmetrical appearance.

Well-developed—to grow thoroughly, carefully or soundly.

Well-let-down hocks—short hocks.

Whole color—of one color overall without lighter or darker shading.

Withers—the point where the shoulder blades meet at the top of the back just behind the base of the neck.

Woolly coats—standing away from the body and showing more undercoat; lacking guard hairs to wrap the body.

Working condition—weight without excess fat; muscle-tone and definition.



“Fancy dogs may be measured by any rule however artificial, but a shooting dog should be judged by points relevant to his work.”

J.H. Walsh, 1887

Lumber—cumbersome movement associated with overweight or heavy built individuals.

Median line—the groove formed by bone or muscle development that runs along the center of the skull.

Misaligned teeth—misplaced teeth, usually incisors.

Moderate stop—the depression indicating a change in planes from the top of the skull to the muzzle.

Occipital bone—boney back point of the skull between the ears.

Otter tail—a strong thick tail, wider at the base and tapering to a point; densely coated with hair; constructed to act as a rudder; flat underneath at base. Unique to the Labrador Retriever.

Out at elbows—elbows held away from the chest wall.

Pacing—a two beat gait where both legs on the same side move forward together. Often used by tired dogs or dogs with incorrect balance to avoid interference.

Paddling—energy wasting movement where pasterns and feet of the forelimbs move in a circular motion and feet flick outward at the end of each step.

Patella—part of the stifle joint; kneecap.

Point of shoulder—the junction of the shoulder bones just behind the brisket.

Point of rump—the junction of the hip bones just below the base of the tail.

Pounding—short, choppy gait where the front legs strike the ground heavily.

Short-coupled—the length between the last rib and the junction of the hind-quarters is relatively short and therefore strong.

Sickle hock—when the position of the lower thigh and the rear pastern take on a sickle-shaped appearance when viewed in profile. The rear pastern will no longer be positioned at a 90 degree to the ground when the dog is allowed to stand naturally. Often observed in dogs with very short rear pasterns.

Side-winding—a forward movement where the spine is not pointed straight ahead and one rear foot passes on the outside of the front footing outward when the dog stands naturally.

Snipiness—weak or pointed foreface.

Soft silky coats—a smooth coat, lacking texture and undercoat.

Soundness—physical construction and mental attitude that allow a dog to perform its function.

Stilted rear gait—choppy, short-stepping movement.

Substance—sturdy build with good bone overall.

Tied-in elbows—elbows placed too firmly against the chest wall; energy wasting gait.



Head study of a
Labrador from
about 1920.

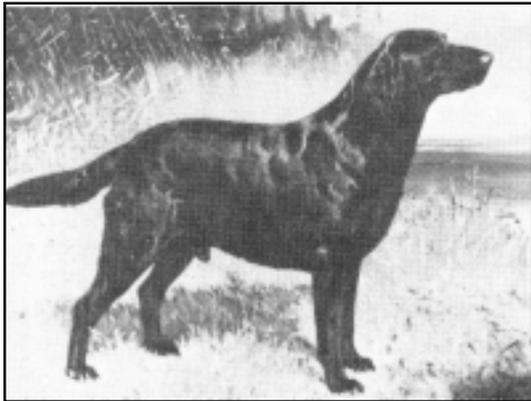
The Labrador Retriever Club (England) was formed on April 5, 1916 to protect the development of the pure bred Labrador. Up until 1916 The Kennel Club permitted dogs of mixed retriever breeding to be registered under whatever breed the owner wished. This situation was obviously not satisfactory and led to problems, particularly in the show ring. The Kennel Club was petitioned to open a separate register for the inter-bred retrievers, thus leaving the way clear for the careful breeding of pure bred Labradors to continue unhindered. A Breed Standard, which remained unaltered until 1950, was drawn up in 1916.



Dual Champion Bramshaw Bob (Great Britain) whelped 12/11/29.

It was not until 1917 that the first Labrador was registered by the American Kennel Club. In 1927, there were only twenty-three retrievers of all kinds (Labradors, Golden Retrievers, Flat-coats, Curly-coats and Chesapeakes) registered with the AKC. During the twenties, American Sportsmen, attempting to emulate the Scottish sport of pass shooting, brought in young Scottish gamekeepers, purchased guns from the finest London gunsmiths and imported dogs from reputable British kennels. Some wealthy families virtually turned their estates into shooting preserves. It wasn't long before the "shoots" developed into field trials. The first trial licensed by the AKC was held December 21, 1931. The Labrador Retriever Club, Inc. was established that same year and the first Labrador Retriever Club Specialty show was held May 11, 1933.

The working ability and temperament characteristics of the breed continued to fuel its popularity and growth. The Labrador Retriever has been for the past decade the most popular breed registered by the American Kennel Club. As the breed continues to expand, it is vitally important that the character of the Labrador be maintained. A character that includes the physical characteristics described in the Standard, athletic ability, a stable temperament, retrieving desire and willingness to please.



**Dual Champions
of the Past**

**American Champion
and three-time
National Field Trial
Champion Shed of Arden.**



Dual Champion Happy Playboy.

Glossary

*Harold Spira's book, **Canine Terminology**, is recommended reading for all prospective judges, exhibitors and breeders. **The Official Book of the Labrador Retriever**, edited by Dr. Bernard Ziessow and published by t.f.h. Publications, Inc., also contains a very complete glossary for the Labrador Retriever. Some of the words and phrases unique to this Illustrated Standard are included in this section.*

Angulation—the angles formed where the bones are joined, such as the shoulder, the hock or the stifle.

Barrel chested—a chest or rib cage with very round contours.

Bone—the size or thickness of the leg bone as it appears in relation to the over-all size of the dog.

Brindle markings—a color pattern made up of several different colors such as brown, tan, and black.

Brisket—the lowest part of the body between the forelegs; the sternum.

Chiseled—clean-cut definition of the skull especially beneath the eyes.

Cloddy—refers to build; thick, heavysset, plain or low on leg.

Coarse—heavy set and typically lack refinement of head. May also exhibit excessive loose skin around the neck and body.

Crossing over—front or rear legs cross over the opposite leg when gaiting.

Croup—rump or buttocks area of the back above the tail.

Ewe neck—a neck in which the topline is concave rather than convex and the base is usually not much larger in circumference than at the head and neck junction.

Feathering—long guard hairs on the buttocks or tail.

Forechest—that portion of the chest that extends in front of the point of the shoulder assembly. Some times referred to as the prosternum.

Game—encompasses a variety of waterfowl (ducks and geese) and upland game birds (pheasant, quail, chukar).

Hare feet—a foot where the two middle toes extend beyond the inner and outer toes and there is less arch to the toes; undesirable in the Labrador.

Hyper-extend—abnormal stretch or reach.

Knuckling over—a bending of the leg at the wrist joint when standing.

Labored—cumbersome movement; frequently the result of carrying too much weight.

Layback of shoulder [humerus]—angle of the shoulder blade or scapula as it slants upward from the breastbone and backward toward the spine.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

A friendly, outgoing attitude that indicates the dog is readily approachable.

WHY—A solid, trustworthy temperament is a hallmark of the breed. Any Labrador that will not allow examination by a judge, or which threatens or attacks another dog in the show should not be judged.

What to avoid:

Any Labrador that gives evidence of shyness or aggression toward humans or other animals. Aggressiveness toward other dogs and especially toward humans is cause for expulsion from the ring.

Disqualifications—

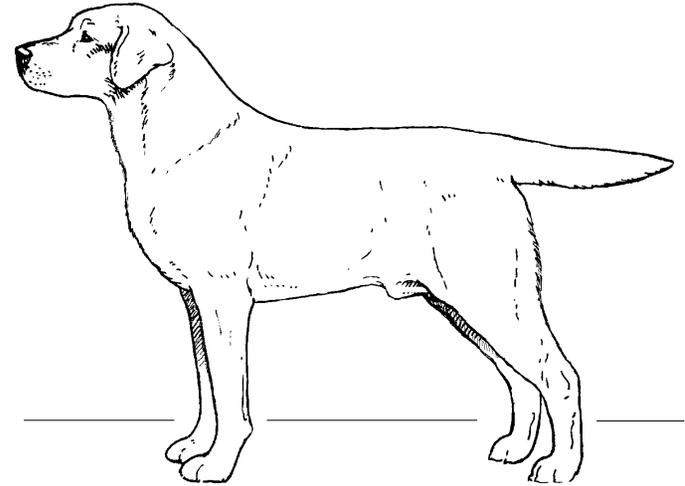
1. Any deviation from the height prescribed in the Standard.
2. A thoroughly pink nose or one lacking in any pigment.
3. Eye rims without pigment.
4. Docking or otherwise altering the length or natural carriage of the tail.
5. Any other color or a combination of colors other than black, yellow or chocolate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



OFFICIAL STANDARD FOR THE LABRADOR RETRIEVER

Approved March 31, 1994

*Key to text—Breed Standard appears in Bold type;
committee comments in Italics and Regular type.*



General Appearance—

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, the 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.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

A medium-sized dog with balanced, correct proportions and an unexaggerated outline. Depth of body with an equal length of leg provides balance. To quote, "One cannot under value proportions and general appearance." The ideal Labrador also possess all the elements of breed character—a head with an intelligent, kind expression; a coat that protects the body; an "otter" tail—as well as effortless movement.

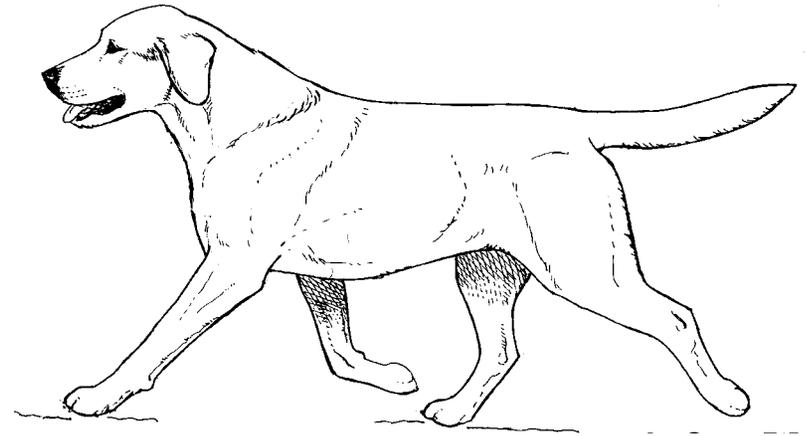
What to avoid:

Individuals lacking the elements of breed character as defined in the Standard; poorly conditioned animals or those with structural faults. If an individual Labrador is reminiscent of any other breed, the dog lacks breed type.

Size, Proportion, and Substance—

Size—The height at the withers for a dog is 22 1/2 to 24 1/2 inches; for a bitch 21 1/2 inches to 23 1/2 inches. Any variation greater than 1/2 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.



"The body must be of sufficient length to permit a straight, free and efficient stride . . ."

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Efficient, effortless movement with hindquarters providing power and strength and the forelegs extending without a wrist-breaking action. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line—legs that move straight forward cover the most ground and use the least amount of energy. At a normal trot the front feet should touch the ground under the muzzle, and the length of stride should be equal in front and back. [All four feet should point straight ahead and elbows should move smoothly against the ribs.] A properly constructed Labrador will give the appearance of being able to maintain a steady ground-covering pace indefinitely.

What to avoid:

Any dog which appears "labored" when moving or shows any evidence of unsoundness.

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.

acceptable. Blacks and chocolates may develop a “rusty” cast when about to shed and this should not be interpreted as a disqualifying combination of colors. Faded noses on yellows with correctly pigmented lips and eye rims are not disqualifying.

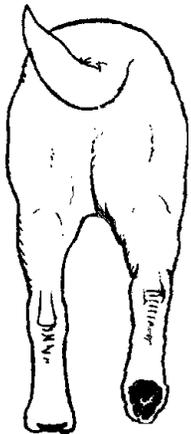
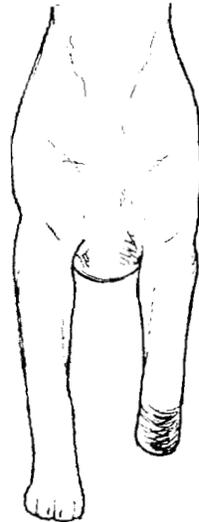
What to avoid:

Any color other than black, yellow or chocolate as described in the Standard.

“... elbows should be held neatly to the body with legs not too close together.”

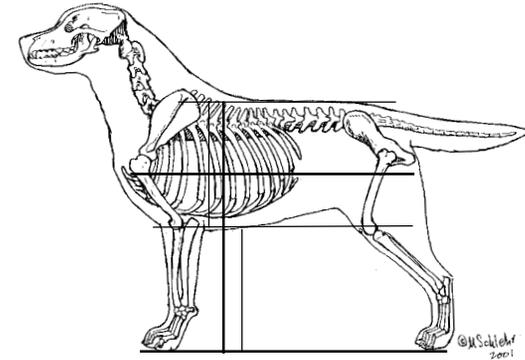
Movement—

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 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.



“... hind legs should move as nearly as possible in a parallel line with the front legs.”

Proportion

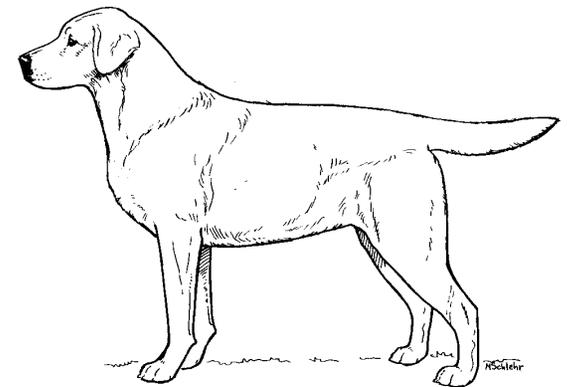


The dog illustrated above demonstrates the desired proportions for the Labrador Retriever; topline is level; the length of body equals or slightly exceeds the distance from the withers to the ground; the depth of body equals the length of leg.

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.**

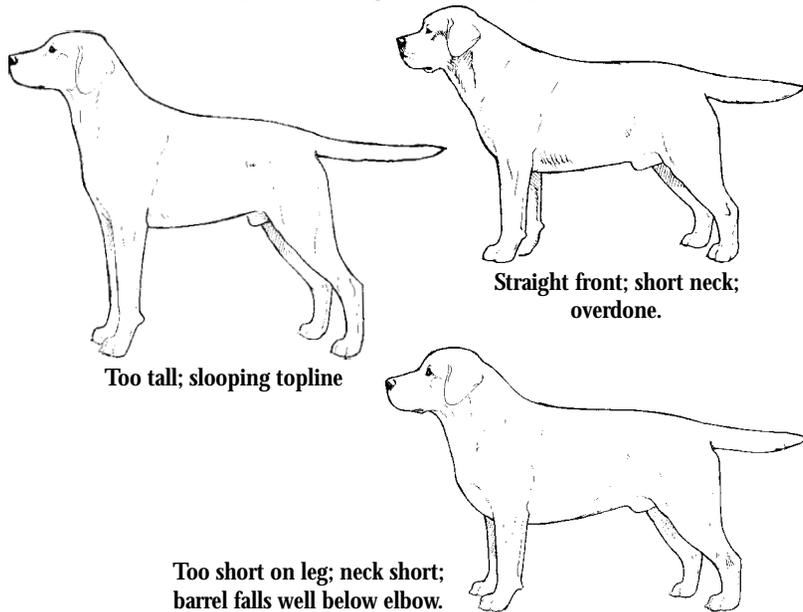
WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

A medium-sized dog with enough height, substance and strength to perform as a working gun dog with a minimum of effort in water or heavy cover.



A bitch with desirable proportions.

Examples Lacking Correct Proportions



What to avoid:

Individuals lacking correct proportions, breed character and balance; overweight, poorly conditioned dogs; any deviation from the ideal prescribed in the Standard.

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-shaped head, or a head long



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.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

A short hard, coarse textured outer coat; undercoat of shorter, softer hair. A correct coat will exhibit little “feathering” on the tail or body.

WHY—A correct coat forms a tight fitting “jacket” over an insulating undercoat maximizing the use of calories. The “jacket” also protects the body in heavy cover.

What To Avoid:

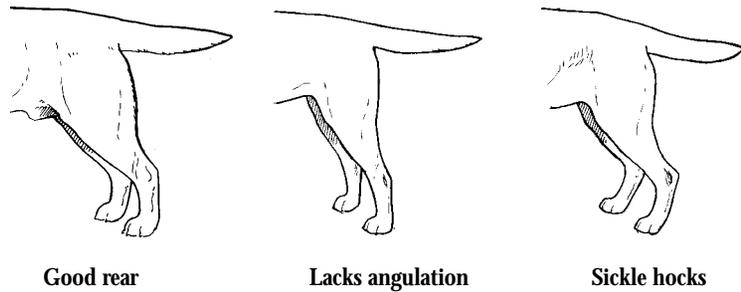
Coats with excessive wave or curls. Silky, glossy coats; coats lacking undercoat; or long open coats that stand away from the body; heavy, woolly-textured coats.

Color—

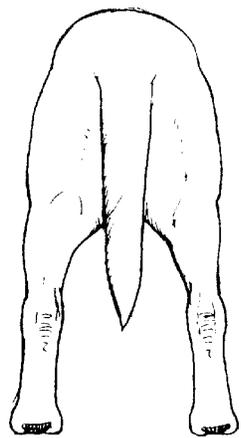
The Labrador Retriever coat colors are black, yellow and chocolate. Any other color or combination of colors is a disqualification. A small white spot on the chest is permissible, but not desirable. White hairs from aging or scarring are not to be misinterpreted as brindling. **Black**—Blacks are all 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.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

The yellow coat color is not a “whole” color. Shading on the underparts of the dog including the legs, feet and tail are normal. Some light cream yellows may appear to be without color except for pale markings on the ears and back, but these are still genetically yellows and completely



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 hyperextend 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.



Desirable hindquarters

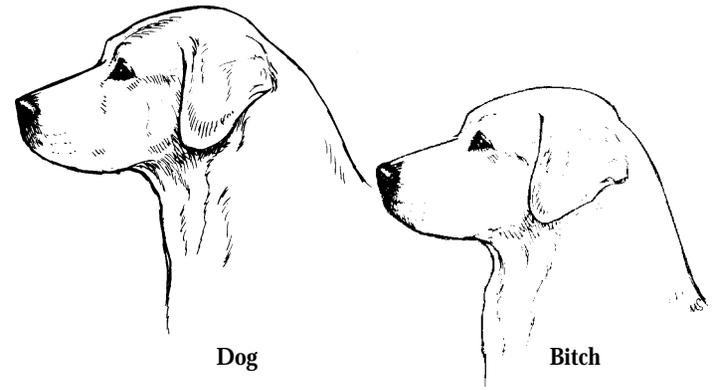
WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Moderately angled hindquarter with strong muscular thighs in balance with the forelimb assembly. The large muscles of the thigh from the stifle to the hock should be firm and strong.

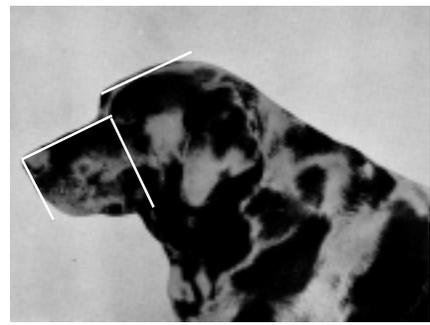
WHY—A well-developed second thigh ensures efficient opening and closing of the hock joint and positioning of the rear foot. Matching angulation, front to rear, added to proper body length, produces the balance required for effortless movement.

What to avoid:

Weak, thinly muscled thighs; over angulation; straight angulation; cow-hocks; sickle hocks, spread hocks.

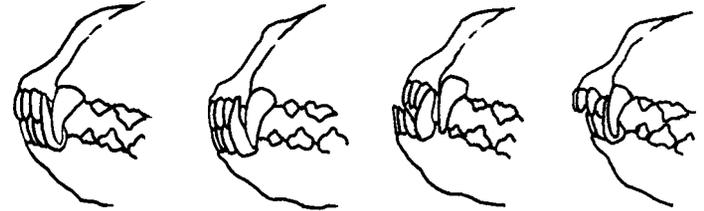


and narrow in muzzle and back skull is incorrect as are massive, cheeky heads. The jaws are powerful and free from snipiness—the muzzle neither long and narrow nor short and stubby. *Nose*—The nose should be wide and the nostrils well-developed. The nose should be black on



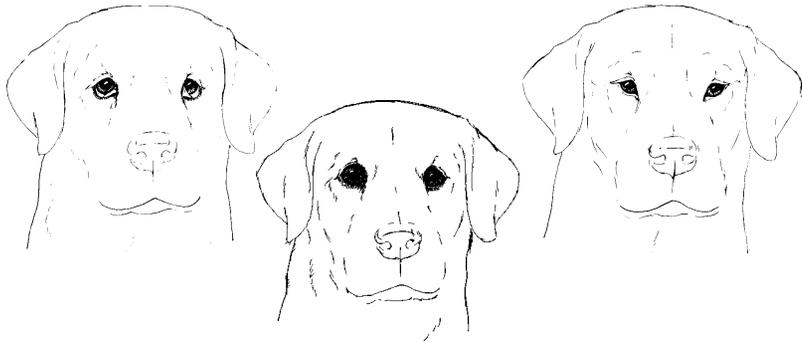
Parallel planes distinguish head type.

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



Correct Scissor Bite Less Than Desirable Level Bite Incorrect Undershot Incorrect Overshot Bite

Please note: Interdigitating premolars can confirm a proper scissors bite.



Less than desirable eye shapes— (left) loose eye rims with saggy haws; (center) round or protruding eyes; (right) small eyes set too close together.

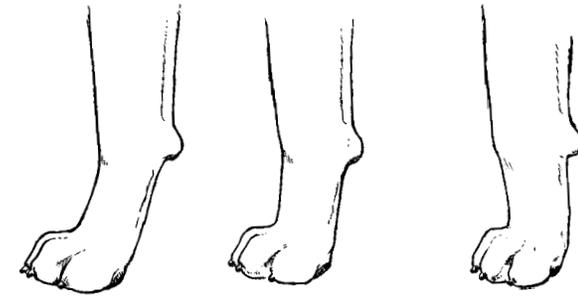
the inner side of the upper incisors. A level bite is acceptable, but not desirable. Undershot, overshot, or misaligned teeth are serious faults. Full dentition is preferred. Missing molars or pre-molars are serious faults. **Ears**—The ears should hang moderately close to the head, set rather far back, 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.



Kindly expression with good chisling beneath the eye; a bit heavy in neck and flews.

Correct eye shape



Proper slope to pastern— good foot

Upright Pastern

Knuckled over

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.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Strong, slightly sloping, short pasterns and well-arched toes; equal length and layback of scapula and humerus. In an ideal structure, the elbow will be positioned naturally beneath the top of the withers.

WHY—Strong pasterns and compact feet with well-arched toes add to the useful working life of the dog. Equal length of scapula to humerus must be coupled with correct positioning at withers for the unit to function properly.

What to avoid:

Straight shoulders; short upper arms; splayed feet; knuckling over or feet turning in or out. Flat fronts caused by any one or a combination of the following: a lack of curve in the prosternum, straight shoulders or the whole shoulder assembly being set too far forward on the body. Flat feet with thin pads.

Hindquarters—

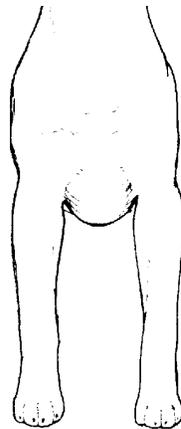
The Labrador's hindquarters are broad, muscular and well-developed from the hip to the hock, with well-turned stifles and strong short hocks. Viewed from the rear, the hind legs are straight and parallel. Viewed from the side, the angulation of the rear legs is in balance with

What to avoid:

Short, thick necks; ewe necks; excessive throatiness (do not mistake the dense coat on the throat and chest of a dog in prime coat for excessive loose skin); straight shoulders; short upper arms; slab-sided or barrel chested individuals. Penalize weak topline; sloping croups that place the tail well off the topline or flat croups that position the tail high on the topline; short rib cages; thin tails lacking adequate coat covering; or tails carried curved over the back.

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



Desirable front



Correct foot



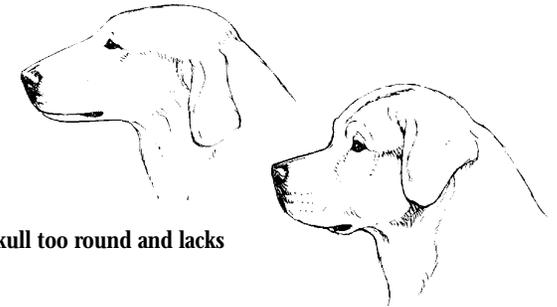
Hare foot



Splayed foot

Incorrect Head Styles.

Head lacks stop, muzzle too narrow, ears set too low.



Right: Muzzle too short, skull too round and lacks parallel planes.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

A friendly, kind expression; unexaggerated skull with a moderate stop; large, well-developed nostrils for scenting capacity; a generous muzzle equal in length to the back skull; a slightly pronounced brow to protect the eyes in heavy cover;] a clean-cut head, chiseled beneath the eyes and free from fleshy cheeks; medium-sized eyes, set well apart; ears in proportion to the skull; correct bite as described in the Standard and full dentition.

WHY—An intelligent, friendly expression is a breed character trait. Length of muzzle should be adequate to allow a dog to comfortably and firmly carry wounded game. A back skull of equal length to muzzle provides stability and strength. The back skull should fit smoothly into a neck with enough muscle to lift and carry heavy game.

What to avoid:

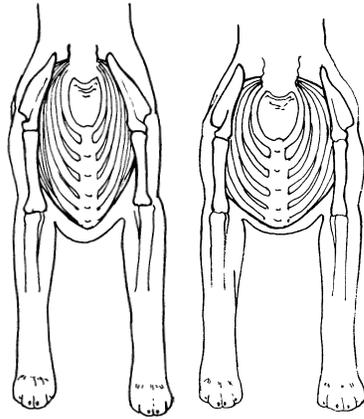
Heads that reflect exaggerations—extreme stops, wedge-shaped heads lacking stop, short muzzles; harsh expressions; round or protruding eyes or eyes set too close together; saggy haws; heads lacking parallel planes; low-set houndy ears; ears too large or too small and set too high on the skull; loose, sagging flews or lips; undershot, overshot, or misaligned teeth; missing molars or premolars; eye rims and lips without pigmentation (this is not to be confused with the seasonal fading of noses found on some yellow Labradors).

Neck, Topline and Body—

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

Left: Correct rib cage construction.

Right: A round rib cage constructions forces front legs and shoulders apart.

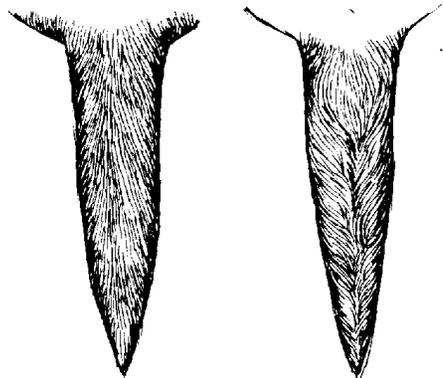


the topline is level from the withers to the croup when standing or moving. However, the loin should show evidence of flexibility for athletic endeavor. *Body*—The Labrador should be short-coupled, with good spring of ribs tapering to a moderately wide chest.

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,

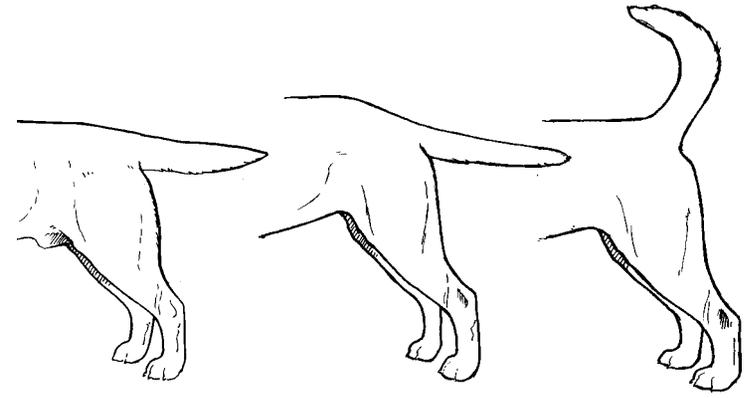
and extending no longer than to the hock. The tail should be free from feathering and clothed thickly all around with the Labrador's short, dense coat thus having that peculiar rounded appearance that has been described as the "otter" tail. The tail should follow the topline in repose or when in motion. It may be carried gaily, but should not curl over the back. Extremely short tails



Desirable Otter Tail

Top

Underside



Tail set—Correct

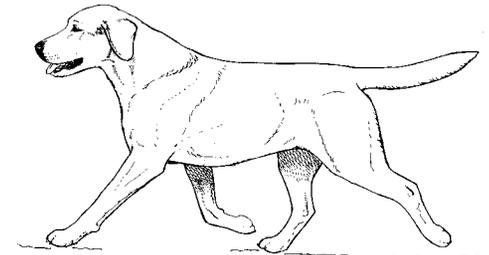
Tail set—Too low

Tail set—Too high

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.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

A neck that exhibits strength and length, with a slight arch and a clean outline; a strong topline and flexible loin; a tail set that follows the topline and a tail that is round and thick at the base, tapering to the end.



WHY—length of neck allows a dog to drop its head and firmly grasp grounded game. Length of back, taken up by rib cage and coupled with a strong loin, strengthens the body unit.

The Labrador "otter" tail is unique to this breed. It serves as a rudder when retrieving in water. A desirable tail will be well-clothed all around and the hair will part or divide on the underside. The coat wraps around the tail giving it its unique character. A correctly clothed tail may have a twist or "twizzle" at the end that is formed by the outer coat. Lack of coat will diminish an otter tail. Ideal tail carriage is level with the topline. Acceptable, but not as desirable, tails carried 45° above the topline. A "gay" tail is carried higher.