

LABRADOR BLABS

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF

UNITED LABRADOR RETRIEVER
ASSOCIATION (ULRA)



For club calendar, see page 3

Volume 2, Issue 3
April, May, June 2004

ULRA SCHEDULES FIRST OFFICIAL UKC EVENTS

Wow, it only seems like yesterday we were sitting around ringside at the Hairless Rat Terrier Club shows in Charlotte and saying, why don't WE have a club ????

And here we are — we are officially recognized by UKC, we are scheduling our first events. Folks, we have come a long way. Many thanks to everyone who is working so hard and putting in so much time to make this dream a reality.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Mark your calendars. We have a "MUST MAKE" date with the UKC Field Rep, Karla Cole for our Rules and Regulations seminar. We need EVERYONE to attend!

August 7, 2004 Time: 0900 Place: 1980 Edmonds Rd., Galax VA
see attached flier for directions

The 0900 Seminar is a Must Attend for Club Members. We have to have people there in order to get approved to go on and hold our shows ! Be there !

Following the Rules and Regs Seminar, we have a picnic lunch, and then our Match. Connie Howard of Curlee Hill Labradors will be our Match judge. We should have lots of fun. Please RSVP about the Seminar to: MARTI ANDERSON, 276-236-8178. So far, we know Rick Ireland is coming from Michigan, and Jeannette and Jim Scott are coming from NJ. So let's see all the 'local' folks out, too !

[Http://Www.ulra.net](http://www.ulra.net)

Many many many many thanks to Jim Scott who has provided us with a professional web site free of charge. This is quite a few hours of his valuable work time donated to creating and updating the site. Jim is also hosting the site on his server. Take time out to go thru the site and find all the features. If you need to provide a new link, etc for Jim, feel free to contact him at the site: jim@ulra.net

Top Ten

As of the June on-line listings, ULRA's impact on the Labrador community in UKC can definitely be felt ! The ULRA dogs who have won a Best of Breed at our supported shows have EACH gone into the Top Ten — Hank, Mousse, Martin, Imp, DJango. That's awesome.

Top Ten points are calculated at 1 point for each dog defeated by winning Best of Breed. For example: If 10 Labradors are exhibited in a show, the BOB winner will earn 9 Top Ten points (you don't get a point for defeating yourself).

ONLY the BOB winner earns Top Ten points. AND there must be at least 3 dogs entered in a Breed at a show for the BOB win to count toward Top Ten points.

Points are updated each month on-line for the months Jan—Nov. During December, the points are updated weekly. To be in Top Ten for the Year, you must be a Champion at the end of the calendar year.

Points are published in Bloodlines for the points available at the 'closing date' for that issue of the magazine. The on-line points are always the most up-to-date.

It usually takes about 3 to 4 weeks AFTER a show for the Top Ten Points from that show to appear in the point totals (clubs sometimes delay in getting their show reports into UKC, sometimes there are errors in the show reports, etc.).

See ya in the Top Ten !!!!!

**EARNING THAT
SHOW CHAMPION TITLE**

You should always read and know the UKC regs for yourself, and those are available on-line at www.ukcdogs.com. But here is a checklist for the show champion title:

- Dog is permanently registered with UKC
- Earn 100 points or more
- Earn Best Male/Female under 3 different judges with a competition award at that show
- A note: you can earn points while Temporary Listed, but you must apply for Individual Registration within the Time Limits specified by UKC ! This is stated on every show entry form.

**EARNING THAT
GRAND SHOW CHAMPION TITLE**

After you have earned the Show Champion title, you can compete for Grand Show Champion title. A note of caution: MAKE SURE your dog has been credited with all it's wins and has in fact been awarded the Show Champion title by UKC. Some clubs are sloppy in their paperwork and make errors which result in your dog's win getting credited to another dog. So check with the Bloodlines reports, and call UKC if you spot an error with your dog's wins. The safest thing to do is to WAIT to move your dog up to CH class until you are SURE it has the CH status. If you move your dog up and it has NOT been officially awarded the CH, any wins it earns during that time towards Grand AND any Top Ten points will NOT count !

To become a Grand Show Champion:

- Win CH class 5 times with at least 3 CH's in each class each win. Each win is a 'leg' toward Grand Show Champion.
- Win BOB from CH class with a combination of at least 3 CH's and GRCH's competing for 1 or more of your 'legs'.

Club Calendar

August 7, 2004	Rules & Regs Seminar: a must attend ! Galax VA 9:00 Rules & Regs starts 12:30 Lunch 2:00 Match: Judge: Connie Howard
Sept 10—12, 2004	4 x ULRA Supported Shows, Charlotte NC (our old friends the Hairless Terrier club) Judges: Jim Heinz, Tina Heinz, June Pasko, Dot Jacobs
October 23, 2004	ULRA Specialties: Salisbury NC 8:00 a.m. Show #1 Judge: Sally Yancey 2:00 p.m. Show #2 Judge: James Ward
Oct 29—31, 2004	4 x ULRA Supported Shows, Charlotte NC Boykin Spaniel (new club) Show Judges: Jim Heinz, Anna Baughn, Maurice Baughn, Darlyeen Rascatti
*** that's 10 more shows this year to earn titles & Top Ten points ***	
February, 2005	ULRA Supported Shows Carolina Classic: Charlotte
April 30, 2005	ULRA Specialties: Salisbury NC 8:00 a.m. Show #1: Judge: Margo Carter 2:00 p.m. Show #2: Judge: Anna Baughn
August 6, 2005	ULRA: Field Events Day: Galax VA TORA, WC, CGC, Match, Annual Eye Clinic
October 22, 2005	ULRA Specialties: NEED A SITE ! 8:00 a.m. Show #1: Judge: Jim Heinz 2:00 p.m. Show #2: Judge: Tina Heinz
Please remember that our club needs all of us to ENTER all the dogs we can at each event so that the club has enough revenue to continue.	
It's OUR club, it's up to US !	

As part of being a club recognized by UKC, we have the opportunity to submit an article each month for Bloodlines magazine. We also post those articles on our web site. For those few folks who do not have internet access, we print selected ones of the articles in the newsletter.

THE LABRADOR RETRIEVER
Essential Elements of Breed Type

Martha B. Anderson, PhD

There are a growing number of Labrador exhibitors entering the UKC conformation ring. Chances are that if you are not used to seeing Labradors at shows, you may soon find these ‘newcomers’ at a show in your near future. In our first article we talked about the rising popularity of the Labrador Retriever, its versatility and appeal, and preparation of the Labrador for the conformation ring. In our second article, we discussed the Presentation of a Labrador in the conformation ring, and provided some ‘tips’ to exhibitors, ringside observers, and prospective Labrador judges. In this, our third and last article in the series, we discuss the essential elements of breed ‘type.’

What do we mean by ‘type’? Newcomers to breeding and conformation exhibition may be somewhat confused by this terminology. For the purposes of this article what we mean by ‘type’ is ‘breed type’ or those characteristics that distinguish a dog of this particular breed from all other breeds and from mixed-breed dogs. Breed type is the constellation of attributes that are the basis of what makes a Labrador a Labrador and NOT something else – for example, a Flat Coated Retriever, or a Curly-Coated Retriever. Breed type is the most essential, the most basic building block of any breed. Breed type is what makes a dog look like it’s a member of a particular breed, not just a generic canine.

Another term that we hear often that needs an introduction for the newcomers to breeding and conformation is ‘soundness.’ Soundness refers to the anatomical correctness of canine struc-

ture. A dog is sound if its angulation is correct both front and rear and it moves correctly; if it has solid joint structure in hips, elbows, hocks, pasterns; if it has a neck properly inset into the shoulder, etc.

Are these two mutually inclusive or mutually exclusive? Can we have a dog with beautiful breed type that is unsound OR can we have a dog with beautiful soundness that lacks breed type?

I read an interesting article by Patricia Trotter in *Dog News* several years ago in which she addressed these questions, and was quoted as saying that ‘breed type is what we breed for’ and ‘soundness’ is what we select for secondarily *after* we acquire the breed type we need. In another, more recent issue of *Dog News* describing Crufts results, and in particular the Labrador winning the Gun Dog group, the late Gwen Broadley (Sandylands) is quoted as having often said, “breed type is what matters most, and a little here and there can of course be forgiven in soundness *IF* the type is correct.”

The ‘appeal to the authority’ of these noted dog and Labrador experts would seem to answer our question and say that ‘yes, breed type can exist with less than perfect soundness.’ They also strongly suggest what many ‘old timers’ and long-time successful breeders will tell you – of the two attributes – type and soundness – type should ALWAYS be given the primary consideration in breeding and evaluating Labradors.

It is our position that while Type is without question the more important characteristic of the two, breeding and exhibiting Labradors that are both Typey and Sound is very possible, and

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to be encouraged as the ideal. The mission of the newly formed United Labrador Retriever Association is to maintain the Labrador as a working Gun Dog, and toward that goal, we naturally espouse the principle that Form Follows Function. We believe that maxim is the principle behind all aspects of correct Labrador type, type which ideally includes soundness, because soundness is required for the Labrador to function properly.

The old rule of thumb in defining Labrador breed type that has been handed down from the generation of founders in America who imported the first Labradors from England between the world wars and again just after the second World War has been “head, coat, tail, temperament.” I believe that we need to add to that short list the following: coupling and front. So the new short list of the essentials of Labrador type is: head, coat, tail, temperament, coupling, front.

We’ll look at each of those elements briefly, and let’s take them alphabetically.

COAT: The Labrador function was originally a water retriever who assisted the fishermen in Newfoundland with their nets and their catch. They evolved into a retriever for the English gentry when bird hunting, mostly upland game birds. This required land and water retrieving. The climates and conditions of the original dog and the evolved dog demanded a double-coat comprised of a dense undercoat and a harsher, water resistant outer coat. That double-coat is one of the ‘hallmarks’ of the breed. It must be double. The best place on the dog to check for double-coating is along the sides of the rib cage, and can be done simply by running a thumb along the ribs from the last rib toward the front of the dog. This will lift up the outer coat to reveal the undercoat. Single-coated dogs should not be rewarded in the ring and definitely should not be used in a breeding program. A single-coated dog will lose enough body heat in cold water or winter land retrieving to be a danger to itself. There is some variation in the outer coat length and density, and generally, this is acceptable *as long as* the outer coat can be considered to be ‘short’ and ‘water repellent’. You can often hear it said in Labrador circles that the coat should fit the dog like a well-tailored jacket. I myself admire a well coated dog, but value the density

of the undercoat more than the plushness of the outer coat, and I don’t like an outer coat so profuse that it masks the outline of the dog. Each breeder and judge must determine for themselves that fine line between a beautifully coated specimen and a dog with ‘too much coat.’ Evaluating dogs during the summer months and perpetually warm climates is notoriously difficult, since so many Labradors use the warmer months to shed out their undercoats and slowly grow in a new coat for the colder months. However, even the barest of summer coats usually will reveal a short crop of new undercoat just protruding above the skin. We must always focus on the function of the coat – to protect the dog from loss of body heat in cold water and cold climates retrieving for hours at a time.

COUPLING: The Labrador is a short-coupled dog. That means the length of the body of the dog should lie in the length of the rib-cage NOT in the length of the loin. Here again, function drives the conformation form. A shorter-coupled dog is a more powerful swimmer, can carry a stronger topline, and has better balance which is often needed for scrambling up the muddy banks of ponds and lakes, and navigating obstacles such as low stone walls, and uneven terrain on longer land retrieves. Anyone who has walked in any Shire in Britain will understand these requirements. Today’s Labradors face similar requirements in many of their traditional bird flushing and hunting tasks, as well as service dogs, tracking dogs, and companions. The easiest way to measure the coupling is to place your hand, fingers pointing to the ground, along side the last rib and see how wide the loin is in comparison to your hand. If you feel that last rib along your thumb and the bend of the stifle beginning along your little finger, you have a very short coupled dog. The old adage in Labradors is that the width of the coupling should be about equal to the width of an average man’s hand. A further note regarding coupling is that the Labrador should have a nearly level bottom line along the underside of the loin or coupling. Looking at our club’s logo, you can see this nicely portrayed.

FRONT: When we look at the front of a Labrador, we must remember the water retriever function of the breed. It is the front that breaks the path of the dog in the water as it swims. For that reason, we strive to have a good deal of prosternum in these dogs. Some have likened that prosternum to the ‘prow’ on a boat.

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Again, looking to our club's logo, you can see a very acceptable but not overdone sternum for a Labrador. The front assembly, as in many breeds, should ideally have a right angle between the upper arm and shoulder layback. And ideally we would like to see the elbows directly under the shoulder when the dog is standing, which does mean equal lengths for the upper arms and shoulder blades. The front on a Labrador should have good breadth to accommodate the strength for swimming as that front develops muscularly to pull the dog through the water with long strokes, and should also have good 'fill' below that prosternum. The fill is the depth of the rib cage just behind the sternum. Again, we see the function of swimming and long retrieves requiring a dog to have plenty of heart and lung capacity, and room for those organs to function properly. As mentioned in our second article in this series, the Labrador should move nearly parallel coming towards you with the front legs straight, not elbowing in or out. This front assembly and movement clearly are tied directly to the functions of the dogs.

HEAD: When you think "Labrador Retriever" you probably don't think of this as a 'head breed.' But in many ways, the head is truly important to the construction of a well made up Labrador. The head is also important in the function of the breed.

Let's first examine the functional aspect of the head characteristics. This is a retrieving breed, and the muzzle, teeth, and nostrils should be put together to facilitate retrieves. This means the muzzle must be of sufficient length, breadth and depth to allow the dog to pick up various sizes of birds (or nets) and return to its person, with the dog NOT harming the bird and still be able to breathe for itself while swimming or trotting. The length of the muzzle therefore should be equal to the length of the backskull (from occiput to stop). The breadth of the muzzle should be sufficient to house a full set of teeth AND provide a wide set of nostrils. The stop should be evident, but not pronounced or rounded. Glance at the club's logo and you will see an excellently portrayed stop. Cheeks should not be rounded or fleshy, but rather more chiseled. You should

clearly be able to see the junction of the muzzle with the backskull. The lines must be clean. The function of the shape of the stop and checks is to facilitate swimming and let the water flow around the head, not for the shape to block water in front of the head. The head of the Labrador should never appear rounded, or as a dish-face from the profile, or cheeky and fleshy.

When looking at that profile, you should see a set of planes – one plane along the backskull and another along the muzzle. Both should be straight. They should be parallel to each other. Look again at the club's logo and you will see these planes, and a beautifully balanced muzzle in terms of its length and depth.

The full set of teeth is frankly a 'nice to have' goal. In reality, it is the canines that provide the frontal barrier, keeping a bird in the mouth as it rests behind the canines. It is critical, essential, for those canines to interlace properly. But it isn't imperative that the bite itself be scissors; in matter of fact, a dog with a level bite is every bit as good a retriever as one with a scissors bite. And while we all strive to breed dogs with full sets of teeth, the premolars really do not provide any additional gripping power for the retrieving dog. A dog, however, with a 'wry mouth' or teeth offset to the side, will have difficulty holding birds, and should be penalized accordingly in the ring, and used with caution in a breeding program.

The eyes of a Labrador are extremely important, not only for the retrieving functions, but also since it is in the eyes that we can see one of the most essential aspect of the Labrador, its temperament. The most correct shape for the eye is actually a 'diamond' shape, often seen expressed as an oval shaped eye. The round eye is absolutely incorrect. Again, the diamond or oval eye allows the dog to partially open the eyes in water, squint when making a mark in the bright sun, partially close the eyes going through rough thickets, etc. Eye color is also important in Labradors, and a black eye should be avoided at all costs and penalized heavily in the ring. Labrador eyes must be brown. Even the lighter-eyed Chocolates have eyes that are recognizable as lighter shades of brown. The English founders of

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the breed often described the Labrador eye color as 'browned sugar.' It is the family of brown colors that allow the true kindness of Labrador temperament to be evident. More on temperament in the paragraphs below.

Finally, with regards to heads, a note on ears. The function of the ears is protective in this breed, and they should be long enough to reach to the inside corners of the eyes. Ear leather should not be fleshy and overly thick, but the ear needs to be well furred and sufficiently thick to do its job.

TAIL: Oh, those famous tails ! Considering the basis of this breed as water retrievers, the importance of a proper tail cannot be overstated. An ideal Labrador tail is as thick around as its owners foreleg, and wrapped in double-coated fur, thickly wrapped at the base in particular, often in a circular or twist pattern at the base. The tail is the rudder, and must be sufficiently strong to adjust the course of its owner in the water. The stronger the tail, the easier it is for the dog to swim because the tail can literally make all of the directional changes for the dog, and the legs are free to provide the locomotion. If a dog has a weak or thin tail, the leg action must be diverted to turn the dog. It's just that simple. The tail set is also critical. That tail should be set straight off the back. Again, the function drives this set. The tail that is set straight off the back will function as a rudder on top of the water naturally. If the tail is set lower, the tail will be below the level of the back of the dog while it is swimming, and the tail will not be able to provide all the turning power for the dog which will again, divert the leg action to turn the dog. Again, we refer you to our logo. The Club Labrador has a beautifully set on tail, just straight off her back. The breadth of the tail is roughly equal to her foreleg. The length of her tail is also very nice, and if it were pulled down toward her hocks, would not be longer than to her hocks. A note, it is perfectly acceptable to have a tail that does NOT fall to the hocks as long as the tail isn't overly short. Remember the job the tail must do. Long and thin tails and tails not set on correctly just can't function properly as rudders.

TEMPERAMENT: Because Labradors are such congenial dogs, many people expect them to behave like bobble-head-dolls with fur, a kind of excitable, hyped-up cheerleader. This is an incorrect perception. The true Labrador temperament can be summed up in two words: kind and biddable. Remembering that the functions of Labradors involve them working in partnership with people, we need them to be biddable. By this we mean that they will do what we ask (or bid) them to do. Life from a dog's perspective must be strange at times, considering all the 'crazy' things we ask them to do, but a Labrador is

long-suffering and will learn to do what it is you the owner or trainer 'bid' them to do. And they often will perform their job with their characteristic (at times almost condescending) kindness. Look into the eyes of a Labrador and you should see their gentleness and kindness. As mentioned in the paragraphs above about eye color, the true gentleness and kindness of a Labrador can most easily be seen in those beautiful brown eyes. So as you select dogs to reward in the ring or to be included in a breeding program, look into the face, particularly the eyes, of a Labrador as it interacts with its people, and you should see that gentleness and kindness, often that resigned air of biddability that seems to say, "oh, here we go again, well... alright ... but just because you asked me to." And often when you catch the look just right, you will see the owner's care reflected in the dog's look "yes, I think you're pretty special, too."

These then are the essential of Breed Type in Labrador Retrievers – coat, coupling, head, tail, temperament. Remembering that the Functions of the breed dictate the forms that are expressed in Type, combining the best of the elements of Type with Soundness is our Ideal, both in the ring and in our breeding programs.

We hope this short series of articles has provided an introduction to our breed for those wanting to learn more about Labradors.

ULRA is found on the web at www.ulra.net and membership information can be obtained from the Membership Secretary, Jim Scott at the web site or jim@twinhollylabs.com

The Bottom Line

Notes from the Treasury

Dear Members,

As you may know, the cost of liability insurance is high. \$435 to be exact. That's an increase from the premium rates we were quoted when we started up the club. The rates have gone up for all clubs.

We truly appreciate you each paying your dues, and the contributions that have been given by so many people, including those nice solicited donations.

We will ONLY be financially viable IF we break even on our events. Pure and simple, plain, honest truth. The Treasury has \$1061.18 as of this writing. After insurance, well, you do the math.

We can ONLY continue IF we all ENTER our events. Remember, we have site rental, ribbons and trophies, judges expenses, and UKC cost of \$100 for our Rules and Regs seminar.

We have acquired judges that are lower cost for the first 2 sets of events and we hope to 'get ahead' a little on these shows. But that requires us to have AT LEAST 20 LABRADORS ENTERED at each show. It's up to us to enter and to show and to encourage our friends to join us. Each entry of each dog matters to the club. We have lots of classes offered, so go ahead, have some fun and trot out those momma's and papa's and those veterans, too. And don't forget the 3-6 month old babies can show in Novice Puppy — what a perfect time to get them out for socialization and ring experience ! Remind your AKC friends that Novice Puppy classes are available on a regularly recurring basis and that we will schedule them FIRST at our shows to encourage people to enter.

Our spring specialties have contracted with Margo Carter and Anna Baughn who are agreeing to judge for expenses only. Again, we need at least 20 Labradors entered in each show. So, please get your thoughts organized NOW to support these shows.

Lastly, the club has entries on-line via Pay Pal. When you enter the shows EARLY via Pay-Pal, you give the Club the advantage of planning ahead and having use of your entry money. We need that right now. So please support the on-line entry and help your Event Secretary manage the entries.

You can even enter the Match via Pay-Pal!

Thanks and looking forward to seeing everyone at the shows,

Fred