

Amalie Labradoodles – Joint care for your puppy

What is canine hip dysplasia (CHD)?

Canine hip dysplasia is a genetic disease. It's a developmental abnormality of the hip joint that can cause osteoarthritis, which is a painful and debilitating condition.

"No one can predict when or even if a dysplastic dog will start showing clinical signs of lameness due to pain. There are multiple environmental factors such as caloric intake, level of exercise, and weather that can affect the severity of clinical signs and phenotypic expression (radiographic changes). There is no rhyme or reason to the severity of radiographic changes correlated with the clinical findings. There are a number of dysplastic dogs with severe arthritis that run, jump, and play as if nothing is wrong and some dogs with barely any arthritic radiographic changes that are severely lame." OFA website <http://www.offa.org/hipgeninfo.html>

How are Amalie's breeding Labradoodles screened for hip & elbow dysplasia?

At 1 year of age, all dogs that we hope to include in our breeding program have radiological screening (X-rays) to assess the hip and elbow joints. The X-rays are taken under anaesthetic and are then examined and graded by a specialist Veterinary Radiologist. Nine features are assessed and scored with a maximum score of 53 (total, 106 for both hips). We aim to breed with dogs that have minimal scores (0=unaffected). This minimizes the chance of our pups and breeding stock, inheriting the trait. Dogs that do not pass our screening are desexed and retired.

How is dysplasia diagnosed?

Generally all newborn puppies have normal hip joints but in those that have hip dysplasia, an abnormality develops during growth. The ball of the joint doesn't fit well into the socket causing wear and tear of the cartilage and changes in the fluid that surrounds and nourishes the joint. Hip dysplasia is usually diagnosed when arthritic symptoms are noticed (eg pain and stiffness).

Preventing dysplasia - what can you do?

While hip dysplasia is an inherited disease, environmental factors will influence progress of the disease. Genetics is not the only factor to shape a dog's health that's why it is important to look after the young pup's joints as they develop, taking special care up to 1 year of age.

Dogs that get a lot of exercise, high speed and bouncy dogs and those that do a lot of stopping and turning when fetching balls will stress the hip joints. A normal hip joint can cope with these activities without developing arthritis. For the dog with a genetic disposition to hip dysplasia, these activities will result in degenerative changes or developmental abnormalities in the joint.

We would recommend that in the young pup (up to 1 year) and the older dog, you:

- discourage jumping from heights (e.g. on and off the furniture or the back of the car) but lift your dog up and down instead;
- minimise puppy traffic on stairs when there are alternatives – you may need to carry him for a while;
- exercise your dog appropriately – gentle play and gradually increase activity as the puppy grows. Running should be self-limiting meaning let the pup run e.g. at the beach or off-leash dog park, but wait until adulthood (after 1 year of age at least) to take your dog on extended runs where he feels obliged to keep up with you;
- provide a balanced diet and avoid obesity.

More information?

If you would like further information, please contact us at tracey@amalie.com.au

Basic information: <http://www.offa.org/hipinfo.html>

Extended reading For Breeders: <http://www.offa.org/refhd.html> <http://www.online-vets.com>

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