

FACTS ABOUT LABRADOODLES

For several years now many people have selected the Labradoodle as a companion based on the assumption that a cross between a Poodle and Labrador will produce a dog that is very clever like the Poodle, and easygoing like the Labrador. Both breeds are very adaptable to training in their own particular ways but unfortunately when crossed; the offspring can be very challenging. In short, when pure breeds reproduce, a certain degree of accuracy can be predicted as to the puppies' potential, but when breeds are crossed, anything can happen!

I believe that Guide Dogs Victoria is to be commended for its work in breeding this particular cross. About twelve years ago, Guide Dogs Victoria crossbred the Standard Poodle and Labrador in an attempt to address the needs of prospective Guide Dog handlers who believed that they suffered allergies to dogs. While they had success in matching some Labradoodles with vision impaired people suffering an allergy, anecdotal evidence and a review of existing literature on the subject established that there was no scientific basis to the assertion that Labradoodles are more suitable than other breeds for people who have allergies or asthma.

Allergic reactions to dogs need to be carefully assessed by a medical expert and an allergic reaction must be considered in relation to each individual dog. Interestingly, people can be allergic to a dog's hair, saliva or secretions from the skin. So people may have a reaction to say two pups in a litter but no reaction to the third pup.

Over the years, Guide Dogs Victoria has only bred a small number of Labradoodles, none of which have been available for sale to the general public. The last litter was bred over three years ago and the association chooses not to recommend any particular breeders of this cross.

Some breeders promote Labradoodles as being hypoallergenic which is of some concern. In fact, it is understood that one particular Labradoodle breeder in Victoria claims that the breed has a non-shedding coat. Guide Dogs Victoria's experience was that it was not possible to stabilize the coat to be non-shedding and that some Labradoodles do shed hair, some more than others. In fact, with some, it came out in handfuls – although the closer the breed is to the Poodle the less likely it is to shed. So prospective buyers need to bear these points in mind carefully when, and if, they decide to choose this particular crossbreed.

I trust this information will be of interest to all dog trainers, instructors and prospective dog owners. At least they will be made aware of the likely development of the crossbreed's character, the assumed effect of the dog's coat in relation to allergies and the actual amount of hair shed. Collectively these points can and should be regarded now as a bit of a myth. Food for thought, isn't it?

Michael Tucker
President AAPDT