

Christmas Puppies

Sometimes folks look to buy “Christmas Puppies” without much thought given to the responsibilities that go with it. Here’s a great excerpt from the AKC news site to consider.

Tips for a Safe and Happy Holiday Season with Your Dog

- Daily routines change during the winter holidays, but try to maintain a feeding and walking schedule as close to your dog’s normal routine as possible.
- Avoid feeding your dog table-scrap and sweets. Chocolate contains harmful, and sometimes fatal, chemicals to dogs. Poultry bones can splinter and cause intestinal blockages.
- Pets are attracted to the taste of anti-freeze, which can be lethal. Check driveways and wipe up leaks immediately.
- Ice-melting chemicals and salt on sidewalks can irritate a dog’s footpads. Wash off your dog’s feet as soon as you return home.
- Avoid decorating with popcorn or cranberry strands, tinsel, and glass ornaments. Dispose of all wrapping paper, bows and ribbons after presents are opened. Keep small decorations out of your dog’s reach.
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If you know of a fellow Silver Labrador Breeder that did not receive this Newsletter, feel free to share yours with them, or have them request one by emailing:

admin@silverlabforum.com

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Genetics

In considering the origin of the modern Silver Lab, the minimally available lines, the subsequent inbreeding of those lines, and how all this affects the dogs we breed, two related population genetics concepts must be considered.

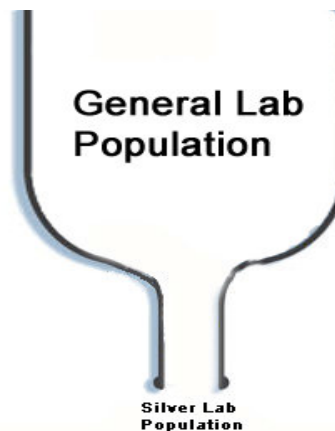
A Genetic “Bottleneck” is usually seen in a population that has a suddenly drastic reduction in numbers of reproductively viable members. Typically, this is applied to populations that are on the brink of extinction. This would be like the California Condor. As the name describes, the population goes through a bottleneck reduction. The result is a smaller population from which a new population can be built, if the population indeed recovers. The caveat is that the population reduction reduces the available genetic information in the gene pool. This gene pool reduction can be hazardous to the continued viability of the population. For example, the Cheetah population is so closely related that if a cheetah-specific disease came into the population all the Cheetahs would likely go extinct as there are not enough genetically different individuals that might have a stronger resistance to that hypothetical disease. The Condors and Pandas are in that same predicament. The Silver Lab population

is the result of a bottleneck by human selection and separation from the General Lab gene pool.

In the first generations after a bottleneck, the potential problems of such a reduced population are not very evident. It is not until around 5+ generations that the population specific traits become apparent and, to an extent, set in that population. This is because the founders of the new population (the individuals that make it through the Bottleneck) may each be genetically very different. However, by continually inbreeding, those differences disappear and traits (good and/or bad) become set. This is the

“Founder Effect.” In the case of the Silver Labrador, the founders are the Silver origin lines, Culo, Beavercreek, Husker, etc. One founder effect is the recessive dilution gene itself that we breed for, it is in all our dogs. Compared to the general Labrador population, this gene is very uncommon, yet in our dogs, it is the norm. The potential issue is that there are innumerable genes in a dog and only a few are even understood enough to even be traceable by DNA

tests. If there are genes that are undesirable recessives that cause health problems or other abnormalities, the effect could be a catastrophic time bomb!Bottlenecks Continued P.2



Christmas continued....

- When decorating with holiday lights, remember that exposed indoor or outdoor wiring could electrocute a curious canine animal that chews on it. Tape wires to the wall or sides of the house.
- Consider an artificial tree. Real Christmas trees may be toxic to dogs. Dogs find tree water tempting, so be sure to use pet-friendly preservatives in the water. Dogs also swallow pine needles which can be harmful. Plants such as poinsettias, holly and mistletoe can be poisonous to pets and should be kept out of reach.

Resist the urge to give your favorite dog lover a cute, cuddly puppy during gift-giving season.

Puppies are a lifetime responsibility requiring exercise, training, veterinary care and – most importantly – love and attention. Instead, consider gift wrapping dog toys or supplies such as a leash, or food bowl to symbolize the gift of a dog to come.

It's also very important to make the puppy buyer aware of a few more things.

- Sure the pup has been vaccinated at 6 weeks but, is he really immunized? No, not until they have received a full series of vaccinations.
- Since the puppy is not fully immunized, ask puppy buyers to NOT stop at the corner or a rest stop to relieve there pups on the drive home. Anywhere that is common ground for animals to stop for relieve is no place for a puppy. Just a great place to be exposed to Parvo, Distemper etc.
- Occasionally puppy buyers want to stop at a pet store such as "PetsMart" on the way home to buy toys, food, etc. and to show off their new addition. We strongly advise against this too. The pet store purchasing should be done prior to picking up a puppy.
- Also, advise the puppy buyer when taking their "well puppy" checkup at the Vet to take the puppy's blanket with them. Hold the pup in their arms until it's time for the office visit. The buyer is taking a healthy pup to a place that regularly has sick dogs and other animals. Lay the blanket on the examining table to prevent any contamination and keep the puppy on that blanket. Then wash thoroughly upon arrival home.

Photographing your Labrador - Tips

• The quality of photographs on your website can really help you sell puppies! Buyers love to see pictures of your dogs because it helps them feel like they know them *and* you. I have many clients tell me they picked my kennel because they loved all the pictures on my website!

• Lighting is everything when taking a photograph. Outdoor shots are best and since dogs can go outside in any weather, hot or cold, you can get a good portrait year round! The first rule of thumb is to stay out of the sun. You can do this by using a cloudy day, finding shade, or by using morning light when the sun is coming up, or evening light when the sun is going down. This is known as "The Golden Hour," the light is soft and colors are deep. You will find your best light this time of day.

• So now you have the perfect light but your dog is running all around! I find it easiest to use the zoom, or telephoto lens, on my camera so I can take pictures of my dogs from a distance. Observe them and wait for your perfect shot. The perfect shot is one in which they are still. Perhaps they hear something and have their ears perked up listening, or are teasing another dog to chase them, or maybe they have decided to lay down in the yard. As soon as they stop moving, start clicking. A good photographer takes many pictures but usually will only keep one or two. Digital cameras allow us to do this without the cost of developing the film, so don't hold back.

• To take portraits of your puppies inside you will want to find a solid color backdrop, a blanket works great. Play around with different colors to see what you like best. Drape the backdrop on the back of a couch, or lay it on the floor and with someone holding it up behind the

puppy. Get on the same level as your subject, which usually means you are laying on the floor with them. You can find props to put your puppies in and on, like a baseball glove, wagon, box, bowl, stack of towels, etc. You may want to use little accessory props like a doll, teddy bear, baseball or flower. If around a holiday, use a candy cane, pumpkin, Easter basket, etc. It's difficult to resist a sweet puppy portrait! Sleeping puppies are great because they are not moving. If your pups are awake you will need another person to keep putting them back in the portrait and fix the props. Again click away freely so you know you'll get the perfect shot!

• Once you've got all those great pictures make sure you take the time to upload them to your website. Pictures sell puppies!

Contributed by: Cheryl Flynn - Silver Rain Labradors



Bottlenecks continued...

Alarming issues like Dysplasia, Thyroid abnormalities, and mismarks such as Bridling seem to be increasing in frequency!

Another issue is "Speciation" (the creation of a new species) caused by this Founder Effect. Speciation usually takes more time than any of us will live, but a new variation of a species, i.e., "Breed," is something that could happen fast, as the population begins to grow after the Bottleneck!

As you see, there are reasons to have concern for the future of the Silver Labrador. The saving grace, however, is that none of this needs to happen. To perpetuate the Silver gene "d," we do not need to inbreed our dogs. Sure, inbreeding is the easiest way to produce more Silvers, but breeding out to other non-silver Lab lines can be an invaluable tool

for you to use to produce better Silvers and ensuring that the Silver Lab is indeed every bit a Labrador as any other Labrador, not a new breed. By using genetic understanding of the recessive nature of the dilution gene, and DNA tests for the dilution gene if needed, breeding to non-silver lines poses no risk of losing the dilution gene. Yet, the benefit for not only your own breeding program, but the population of Silvers as a whole is immense. It behooves us all to consider the non-silver lines more heavily in our individual breeding objectives this coming year!

**Wishing you and yours
a very Merry Christmas!**

