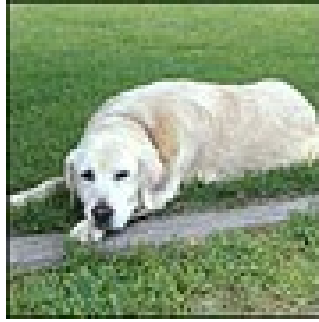


6- Labrador Retrievers



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Breed Profile

Friendly, loving and very playful, the Labrador retriever has become one of the most [popular breeds](#) in the United States. Historically, this large "sporting" breed has been used to hunt and retrieve birds and only recently has the dog become known as a companion dog. The retriever is highly regarded for its good nature, easy trainability and intelligence.

The Labrador retriever was ranked the top breed for the year 2007, according to the [American Kennel Club](#).

History and Origin

The Labrador retriever hails from Newfoundland and not Labrador, as the name suggests, though both areas are located in eastern Canada. It is possible that geographic confusion led to the name. Exactly how the breed came to inhabit Newfoundland is not known. The first written report of the breed dates to 1822. Fishermen brought the breed to Britain in the early 19th century. Originally, the dogs ranged from a heavy-coated variety known as the Large Newfoundland to a smaller rough-coated variety called the Lesser Newfoundland or St. John's Dogs. The modern-day [Labrador retriever](#) probably descends from this St. John's Dog and the currently known Newfoundland breed from the Large Newfoundland.

The breed was not originally used as a companion dog. Instead, retrievers were bred exclusively as hunters, a job for which they possessed superior talents. The Labrador retriever was officially accepted into the English Kennel Club in 1903 and the American Kennel Club in 1917.

Over the years, Labrador retrievers have become useful as [guide dogs](#) for the blind, deaf and other handicapped individuals because of their intelligence, trainability, well-rounded temperament, as well as their ability to get along well with people. They are trained as [therapy dogs](#) to comfort residents in nursing homes and emotionally disturbed children. The [military](#) and police force employ the breed for scent-discrimination to track criminals, drugs, weapons, bombs, and to find people buried in debris of earthquakes or other disasters.

Appearance and Size

The Labrador retriever is a strong, medium-sized dog possessing a sound, athletic, well-balanced conformation that enables him to function as a retrieving gun dog and as a member of the family. The coat is short, dense and weather-resistant and is black, yellow or chocolate. The breed has an

"otter" tail that is thick at the base and gradually tapers.

The adult Labrador stands 21 to 24 inches at the shoulder and weighs 55 to 80 pounds.

Personality

The breed is known for its kindly, outgoing and tractable nature. The Lab is eager to please and usually non-aggressive toward man or animal.

Home and Family Relations

The Labrador retriever is good-natured and gentle enough to live with [children](#), though some breed lines have been found to be somewhat hyperactive. The breed will share the home with another dog if introduced and socialized at an early age but has a tendency toward jealousy. They are not the best watchdogs as they are not overly suspicious and might be won over by a friendly gesture of a stranger.

Training

Labrador retrievers are intelligent and love to learn. Most Labradors can begin command [training](#) at 6 to 8 months of age. At this age they can have twice daily, 10-minute lessons. If the dog wanders physically or mentally, he is still too young to begin training. Should the dog misbehave, the reprimand must be consistent and appropriate.

Special Characteristics

Labrador retrievers are powerful swimmers, a skill aided by the webbing between their toes and their water-resistant coats. They are also avid hunters.

Special Care

By heritage, the Labrador retriever is a worker and requires regular [exercise](#). They should have three walks per day and not be allowed to remain inactive and grow overweight. On the average, an overweight dog will die at an earlier age than a trim, active dog. The dog can become depressed and destructive in the home if adequate exercise is not allowed and encouraged.

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Common Diseases and Disorders

In general, the Labrador retriever is a healthy dog with few medical concerns. However, the following diseases or disorders have been reported:

- [Gastric torsion](#), also known as bloat, is a life-threatening sudden illness associated with the stomach filling with air and twisting.
- [Hip dysplasia](#) is a malformation of the hip joint that results in pain, lameness and arthritis.
- [Elbow dysplasia](#) is the abnormal development of certain parts of the elbow joint during the growing phase of a dog's life.
- [Progressive retinal degeneration](#) is a disease that causes nerve cells at the back of the eye to degenerate. The condition can lead to blindness.

- [Hemangiosarcoma](#) is a type of cancer that primarily affects the spleen, liver or heart.
- [Epilepsy](#) is a seizure disorder which develops between the ages of 2 and 5 years.
- [Interdigital Dermatitis](#), also known as pododermatitis, is an inflammation of the paws involving the feet and nails.
- [Atopy](#) is an itchy skin disease of animals that is caused by an allergy to substances in the environment.
- [Food Allergy](#) affected pets develop skin allergies due to a variety of food ingredients.
- [Mast Cell Tumors](#) are malignant tumors than can occur in the skin or within the body.
- Perianal Fistula is an infection and fistulas of the anal glands and tissues around the anal area.
- [Lymphosarcoma](#) (lymphoma) is a malignant cancer that involves the lymphoid system.
- [Cataracts](#) are opacities within the lens of the eye that affect vision.
- [Glaucoma](#) is a disease of the eye that develops when the pressure within the eye increases.
- Lipomas are benign fatty tumor of the subcutaneous tissue.

Other diseases that are found more commonly in labs than in other breeds are [osteochondrosis](#), [seborrhea](#), [hot spots](#), [diabetes](#) and [hypothyroidism](#). They are also prone to [melanoma](#), a type of cancer. Labradors that hunt and swim are prone to foreign bodies becoming embedded in the ears and under the eyelids and ear infections.

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In addition, although these occur infrequently, the following disorders have also been reported:

- Tricuspid valve dysplasia - is a congenital developmental problem associated with a valve in the heart.
- [Osteocondrosis of the shoulder](#) is congenital problem that causes degenerative joint disease of the shoulder joint.
- [Ruptured Cranial Cruciate Ligament](#) is a problem that results from tearing of the cruciate ligament, causing lameness that may be severe.
- [Diabetes Mellitus](#) is a disease of the pancreas related to insufficient amounts of insulin production.
- [Hyperadrenocorticism](#) is a disorder affecting the adrenal glands. When overactive, the adrenal glands secrete excessive cortisol, resulting in illness.
- Nasal Depigmentation - may affect some yellow Labradors. Seasonal depigmentation is also seen in this breed.
- Cutaneous Histiocytoma - is a benign tumor of the skin that can affect young dogs.

- Retinal detachment is the separation of the retina, the innermost tunic layer of the back of the eye.
- Entropion is a problem with the eyelid that causes inward rolling. Lashes on the edge of the eyelid irritate the surface of the eyeball and may lead to more serious problems.
- Ectropion is a problem with the eyelid that causes eversion of the eyelid margin. It most commonly affects the lower central eyelid.
- Congenital Idiopathic Megaesophagus - is a dilatation of the esophagus caused by decreased contraction of the muscles, causing food regurgitation.
- Lick granuloma is a condition in which the dog licks an area excessively, usually on the front leg, until a raised, firm ulcerated lesion is formed.
- Myasthenia gravis is a disorder characterized by muscular weakness that is aggravated by activity and relieved by rest. It is caused by an impairment of transmission of nerve impulses to the muscles, which results in muscle weakness.

Life Span

The average life span of the Labrador retriever is 10 to 13 years.
