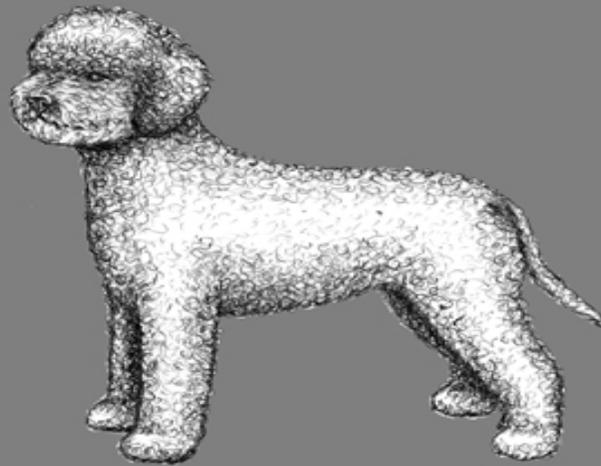


Volume 3, Issue 1

September
2008

LCA Newsletter

LAGOTTO Club



of AMERICA



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LCA Newsletter

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Message From Our President

Update on LCA Activities as We Continue to Grow

Judith Martin
LCA President



The days are getting shorter and we are noticing the weather is starting to cool in the evening in our area of Central Arizona. Our dogs still spend a lot of time in and out of their kiddie pool and even our Wheaten Terrier, who used to passionately hate water, is now in the pool every day as well. I guess an old dog, (she is 10) can learn new tricks from out water dogs.

Last month we attended the Lagotto Club of America Southwest Fun Match. We had folks from Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico in Santa Fe with 15 Lagotti in attendance. The club has voted to help support and sponsor any area gathering that has club members involved. I hope some of you will get in touch with those near you and plan a get together. Please ask any of your Board members and we can offer suggestions along with \$50 to help defray expenses.

There are many ways you can plan a fun match and it is often easy to get an experienced dog person to be the judge

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Test for Benign Familial Juvenile Epilepsy now Available

Helping Us Develop Better Dogs

Submitted by Hilarie H Gibbs-Sykes

Benign Familial Juvenile Epilepsy – BFJE – is a transient neurological problem occasionally seen in very young Lagotto puppies. Symptoms show up in affected puppies at 4 to 5 weeks of age and typically disappear by 7 to 13 weeks of age.

Symptoms can vary – behavior ranging from a fleeting and barely observable tremor in the head and/or legs to a high stepping wobbly gait to seizures have all been seen. Eventually, the frequency of the symptoms decrease until the puppy no longer shows any symptoms.

Studies in Finland indicated that BFJE most likely had an autosomal recessive mode of inheritance, meaning that the disorder was caused by recessive genes and that in order to be affected a puppy must have two copies of this recessive gene – one from each parent. In the course of performing the research to develop a genetic test for the disorder, this was proven to be the case.

Now **Canigen** has developed a simple genetic test that will tell us our dog's status regarding BFJE. The test can be done with either a blood sample or a buccal (cheek) swab. As the test is only available in Finland, it is probable that the cheek swab will be the preferred method for those of us in North America. The cost of this test is 85 EU, which at current exchange rates is just under \$130.00 US.

Although this may seem expensive it is in line with the prices of genetic testing offered by **Optigen** here in the US (see price list at http://www.optigen.com/opt9_price.html for comparison). And, unlike the physical exams we do annually for some disorders that we cannot test for, it only needs to be done once.

Testing will enable us to determine the BFJE status of the dog so that we can avoid producing affected puppies.

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for the show part of the fun day. Anyone can enter the fun match which is a mock dog show. You don't have to plan a show career for your dog. Just meet with other owners and have fun.

The annual Truffle Festival will be in Eugene, Oregon from January 30 to Feb.1 in 2009. We are hoping to meet as many of you as possible at this event. If we have interest, we will plan a club event around this festival.

A Little Word about Training.....

Robin Morehouse, CTC
Santa Fe, New Mexico



Hi, my name is Robin and I'm in love with a Lagotto! I'm a certified pet dog trainer from Santa Fe and my dog's name is Roma. I know how to teach dogs to sit to greet people and I have helped hundreds of their people learn how to use dog friendly methods.

Roma jumps on me and other people... a lot. There is a very good reason, it's because, most of the time I really like it and reward her nutty behavior by engaging with her in a noisy, rowdy love-fests. She only jumps on the people who engage with her in love-fests of their own, so I don't see a problem for my bambina. If, on the other hand, you have the preference of having your Lagotto sit to greet, in my opinion- here's the best way.

When a dog jumps on you, she is trying to engage with you. You engage with the dog by speaking to the dog, touching the dog, or looking at the dog. Even if you are saying No! Down, looking angry and trying to push the dog away. It will not work, so let's try something that will work.

Ignore your dogs attempt to engage with you when it is jumping up or is behaving overly excited. Disengage. How?

Avoid looking at the dog, speaking to the dog, or touching the dog when it is jumping on you. Stand in a relaxed manner with your chin a little lifted and be patient. Turn away, turn to face a wall or tree if that helps you to be patient. When the dog has gotten calmer, you can look, touch and talk. If the dog gets reenergized, disengage again. Repeat.

If the dog still reenergizes after a few tries, be less exciting yourself (don't look as much, talk as much or touch as much) or walk away and try again in awhile (10 seconds to 10 min). Most dogs learn this in less than 5 minutes, but will need to build a strong behavior muscle by lots of practice.

When visitors come, have the dog on a leash. Hold the dog out of reach until the dog is calm (10 seconds to 10 minutes), only then going closer. If the dog jumps up - move away and stay away a bit until the dog is less

interested in the new arrivals. When the dog keeps all four on the floor and stays reasonably calm, give calm greetings like a massaging type touch, crooning words and smiling eye contact BUT if the second the dog jumps up.... Turn away!!!

Robin Morehouse CTC is a graduate of San Francisco SPCA Academy for Dog Trainers, is a member of Association of Pet Dog Trainers and has extensive knowledge about canine nutrition and alternate health care.

MEET THE BREED!

TAKING YOUR LAGOTTO TO AKC SHOWS

Therese Williams
LCA West Director

On June 29, 2008, three of us in NW Washington State took our Lagotti to the BelVernon Dog Show in Mt. Vernon, WA. We were "vendors" of sorts, setting up a "Meet the Breed" booth so others could enjoy and learn about the Lagotto Romagnolo.

We set up a tent, table, and large banner with various items on display; informational flyers, white and black truffles, truffle oil, magazines, books, and had a DVD from the Italian Club regarding truffle hunting and training. We also passed out little Italian flags along with the flyers. The turnout and interest at the booth was great, and we were heavily visited by those breeders, owners and handlers of Portuguese Water Dogs – go figure! One of our newer members, Kathy Ryan who owns the business www.tailsaloft.com made a Lagotto windsock for us to fly as well. Gini Anderson drove up from Tacoma to visit and show off her two girls she got from Scott Carver's litter. As we took the dogs around for little leg stretches and potty breaks, we heard the infamously whispered question, "what kind of dog is that?", so of course, had to stop and answer all questions.

What was most impressive was the AKC Executive Field Rep. from North Carolina; Lee Whittier came to talk to us several times and was very impressed with our dogs, and seemed to be quite taken with the breed. Thanks Lee!

This is the official photo we had taken that day: Ivy Cadman & Smidge on the left, West Director Therese Williams & Guido in the middle and Guadalupe Ramirez & Lluvia on the right.



It was such great fun that our President, Judith Martin will be doing this at some shows in and around Phoenix in November.

Santa Fe Fun Match

Event was Educational and Entertaining

Scott Carver with follow-up from Kate Wall-Ganz Fifteen Lagotti, their owners, and several hope-to-be owners gathered under the cloudy, morning skies in the foothills of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Six of the dogs are siblings, some meet weekly for fun, and for some dogs, this was the first time to meet each other. Lagotti are the happiest with their own breed. Tails wagging, they ran, they jumped, they chased, they dug, they jumped in the water and once in a while they came back to their owners for a quick pat on the head before racing back to the frolicking pack. This was dog heaven!

Once we two-legged creatures had met, mingled and eaten donuts, it was time to practice showing before the "dog show".

For many, this was the first time to put on a show collar. We learned where to place it so the head is held high when showing. We learned that when going down and back, the judge looking at the dog's movement. It is important to go at a nice trot, not too fast and not too slow, but at a pace where the dog moves easily and freely. It is important to keep the dog, not you, directly in front of the judge so the judge can evaluate the dog's rear when going down and the head, eyes, and face when coming back. Slow down sufficiently so you can stop a few feet in front of the judge, rather than skidding to a stop at their feet.

With that short practice, it was time to meet our AKC judge. She explained that a judge is looking to see which dogs most closely match the breed standard. Some judges look for faults and others look for positive matches to the breed standard. Our judge looked for the positive.

In our Fun Match, the male puppies were shown first, then the female puppies, followed by young males, young females, and lastly older males and older females.

The owners and dogs of the particular group to be judged lined up in front of the judge. The judge looked at the dogs overall...height, weight, size, proportion, stance, etc. The judge approached each dog, watching to see how they reacted to a stranger: were they bold, afraid, timid, scared, anxious or curious? The judge felt the dog's muscle tone and strength, bone structure and if the dog was overweight or too skinny. The judge felt the back to see if there was a dip or if the rear end was higher than the shoulders. The judge pulled the tail down to see where it reached on the dog's hind legs. The dog's body squareness and rear leg angles were also judged. The judge checked their bite, eyes and the way the ears were set on the head. We took our dog down and back so the judge could see the dog's movement.

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Possible results from Canigen BFJE test

N = Normal (Clear)

Homozygous (2 genes are the same) for normal gene, & will never develop the disorder

C = Carrier

Carries one disorder gene, but will never develop the disorder

A = Affected

Homozygous (2 genes are the same) for disorder gene and will develop the disorder

As the chart below indicates, as long as one parent is tested clear of BFJE, the other parent can be a carrier or an affected with NO danger that affected puppies will be produced. ON the other hand if two carriers are bred or a carrier is bred to an affected, there is a high risk of some puppies being affected. And of course, if two carriers are bred all puppies will be affected to some degree.

Possible outcomes when breeding dogs with known BFJE status

Parent 1 Status	Parent 2 Status		
	Normal/Clear	Carrier	Affected
Normal/Clear	All = Normal/Clear	1/2 = Normal/Clear 1/2 = Carrier	All = Carrier
Carrier	1/2 = Normal/Clear 1/2 = Carrier	1/4 = Normal/Clear 1/2 = Carrier 1/4 = Affected	1/2 = Carrier 1/2 = Affected
Affected	All = Carrier	1/2 = Carrier 1/2 = Affected	All = Affected

This test should be done on preferably both, but at least one dog in any breeding pair to ensure that NO affected puppies are produced. The beauty of testing is that it allows us to use any healthy dog in our breeding program regardless of BFJE status and completely avoid producing affected puppies. Thus testing allows us to conserve genetic diversity, which given the small numbers of Lagotto in North America is an important consideration.

One final thought – BFJE should not be confused with the so-called Cerebellar Anomaly, often referred to as “CA” and thought by some researchers to be a form of Cerebellar Abiotrophy. BFJE is a transient disease. CA is progressive and ultimately fatal. Furthermore CA is so rare that researchers do not have enough DNA material to begin researching it according to Professor Lohi (who leads the group that researched BFJE).

Once the judge individually checked each dog in the group, all the owners and dogs went around the ring. Our judge moved the first dog to the last position and continued to rotate positions, as some dogs looked better at the front of the procession and vice versa.

The judge decided which in the group best matched the breed standard. This winner would compete against the winners from the other groups.

Each time the dogs were judged, the judge forgot everything from the previous round and compared the dogs to the current competition. Finally, the best of the females was selected and the best of the males was selected. The winner between these two was named Best in Match and the other was named Best Opposite Sex.

After the judging was complete, our judge took about 10 minutes with me and my two Lagotti and explained the difference between the two. She showed me why she felt my female had better squareness and rear leg angles. Just those few minutes alone with the judge was worth the six hour drive to the Fun Match.

We had a demonstration on grooming and how to measure the dog's height. The dogs weren't too cooperative, as the kiddie pool was full of water and the afternoon was getting hot. It was so much more fun to chase, run and splash rather than be handled on a grooming table. Go figure!

Kate Wall-Ganz was the food organizer and she had food for an army! There were meats and cheeses, rolls and breads, salads, fruits, drinks and desserts; more than all of us could eat. Thanks Kate!

By 3:00 in the afternoon the dogs were tired and the people exhausted. Everyone said good-bye and loaded up into their crates and cars.

Thank you to Santa Fe for hosting a fantastic Fun Match. We look forward to next year and even more Lagotti in attendance.

FOLLOW-UP

On July 13th Santa Fe hosted the 2nd Annual Southwest Lagotto Fun Event. Fifteen dogs from 3 states attended; New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado. More than 25 humans were present as well, owners, friends and interested prospective owners.

Among the events of the day were a handling clinic; a Fun Match judged by Jan Paulk, an AKC judge of Toy and Working Breeds. She was much impressed by the dogs' personalities and appearance and looks forward to being able to judge Lagotti at AKC shows. We also had a grooming presentation from Judith Martin. Finally, all the dogs were measured for size and ranged from 17 inches to

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21 inches. The dogs, of course also got to compete in some fun games with awarding of prizes.

In the Fun Match the winners were:

9 - 12 Month Dogs:

Dante Blakeslee
Tato Luckhardt
Ricci Luckhardt
Vando Martin



18 - 24 Month Dogs:

Kodi Carver

Open Males:

Teo Wall Ganz
Giorgio Silbert



9 - 12 Month Bitches:

Silvie Heacox
Roma Morehouse
Sophie Clinton
Emma Wolf



Open Bitches:

Augi Carver
Adrina Martin

Winner's Dog:

Dante Blakeslee

Best of Breed:

Augi Carver



Do You Really Want to Breed?

It's More Than Just a Leap of Faith

Judith Martin
LCA President

So you want to be a breeder? Are you sure? Consider the following:

It is 3:00 am and the clock is ticking slowly and you are working so hard to stay awake. Your girl's temperature dropped about 8 hours ago, she was shivering and shaking and you are sure she should have started labor about several hours ago. She is now pacing and uncomfortable. What do you do? Do you call the vet and take her in with emergency and after-hours fees?

Your girl is unhappy with the whelping box you have provided and appears to be withholding the delivery of the puppies. Should you leave her on your bed, which she prefers?

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You are quickly trying to assist your nervous new mom with the delivery of a new baby and she inadvertently chews the umbilical cord too close to the puppy's body.

You have a puppy that seems to be full size but it isn't breathing.

You've just whelped a litter of 8 puppies and the immature mom has decided she wants no part of nursing. You know the babies need to have her colostrum and puppies need feeding every two hours.

Your girl's post-partum discharge has changed to a greenish color and smells bad.

Your excited mom has stepped on one of the babies and now it won't stop crying.

These things may never happen but they have, can, and will sometimes. This is the short list of what you might need to be prepared for.

But let us start at the beginning. You have studied the breed standard for Lagotti, you have a girl that is the picture of a beautiful Lagotto. She is now 2 years old or on her third season and you think she is mature enough to be a mom. She is registered with AKC Foundation Stock Service (FSS) program.

You have shown your girl or had her evaluated by a very experienced dog handler and she is proven to have good bone structure, movement, a nice coat and wonderful temperament. You have studied the qualities of all the dogs in her pedigree and have now chosen a male that also has excellent conformation and temperament and other qualities that complement your girl's good qualities and can improve her other qualities. His pedigree contains dogs which you believe will offer good genes to this pairing. He is also registered with AKC FSS.

Once you have selected the perfect mate for your girl, you have to decide how and where the breeding is to take place. Are you going to deliver your girl to the stud dog or send her on a plane? It is customary for the girl to go to the male. You may also decide to have fresh or frozen semen provided that is administered by your vet or another experienced person. With the latter methods, you need to have blood tests to determine progesterone levels so you know precisely when the breeding must take place. Hopefully not on a weekend when it is difficult to get lab scores.

If you own a stud dog, are you prepared to house and care for the bitch that is to breed to your boy? Have you done the necessary tests for pre-breeding? Do you have an appropriate contract?

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Once you have had a successful breeding, now you just wait and answer the multitude of calls wanting a puppy. How do you screen for the perfect home? How do you determine the difference between the family that wants a puppy because it is a status symbol and very rare, from the family that dearly wants a robust, rambunctious, energetic ball of fur with a great temperament, and is willing to provide lots of mental and physical exercise along with a lifetime of love?

Are you sure your vet is available to you for whelping questions, or help at night or on weekends should you have an emergency or need assistance?

Are you able to give adequate socialization and stimulation to a bunch of busy robust puppies? Where are you going to put them once they are ready for their growing world?

There are many questions above studying the health issues, the pedigrees, the temperament and the beauty of this breed. It is a big responsibility to mate two dogs and then provide education and support to the new families for the life of all the dogs you help bring into this world. Many experienced breeders are available to be mentors and it should be a priority to educate yourself and seek the advice of those who have gone before you, before deciding to breed a litter.



Make no mistake. While puppies are cute and fun, they are work! Consider all the consequences and time commitment before taking the plunge into the breeding world. That said, this can be one of the most rewarding experiences too, and enjoy the photos above.