

Double Banded Labradors
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Puppy Care Information

Food/Nutrition:

We feed Victor HiPro Plus food, which can be purchased at feed stores, mom and pop pet stores, and Chewy.com. We strongly suggest you continue to feed this food when you first bring your puppy home and change to the new food of your choice gradually over about one week. Just make sure to feed a food with a balanced ratio of Calcium and Phosphorous; the closer to 1:1 the better. An imbalance and over-supplementation of Calcium and vitamin D are believed to cause some skeletal growth problems (such as hip dysplasia and elbow disorders). We recommend an All Life Stages foods for our Labrador puppies to ensure a slow, controlled growth. Puppies growing too quickly or unevenly can present with lameness, for which another cause cannot be found. Other brands we recommend are Wellness, Fromm, and Sport Dog dog foods.

Do NOT free-feed (keep food out at all times) your puppy or dog because they will often over eat. Follow the directions on their food bag as a general guideline for feeding amounts. Adjust the amount as needed to keep your dog slim. It is better to have a slim dog rather than an overweight dog. Keep your puppy slim throughout his lifetime. An overweight dog has a much greater risk of developing joint problems because of the excess weight. Also, over feeding a puppy can cause skeletal growth problems.

Immunization & Medications:

It is important to ensure your puppy is properly vaccinated to provide immunization against canine contagious diseases. Your vet will assist you in scheduling the vaccines. Your puppy will have his or her first set of vaccinations before leaving our home; usually at 7 weeks of age. We recommend a vaccination schedule of a combination vaccine at 7, 12, and 16 weeks of age. The combination vaccine typically immunizes against: adenovirus, hepatitis, distemper, parainfluenza, and parvovirus. Be cautious not to over-vaccinate your puppy, because it can damage the puppy's immune system. At 16 weeks of age or a little older, your puppy needs a rabies vaccination, which will be needed every year to 3 years, depending on the type, for the life of the dog. If your dog will be exposed to other dogs often, consider Bordetella (kennel cough) given every 6 months and parainfluenza vaccination given yearly. Dogs being boarded, in training, or that attend canine events are typically required to have these vaccinations.

Your puppy will also need to begin heartworm medication soon. Your vet will inform you when to begin the medication. He will need this medication monthly to prevent a heartworm infection, which are often fatal. Dogs can acquire heartworms even when kept indoors. We do not recommend ivomectin-based heart worm preventatives, due to an increased resistance to it. We also recommend flea and tick medication monthly. Dogs can contract diseases from ticks.

Spay & Neuter and Sexual Maturity:

Labrador Retrievers are not sexually mature until 18-24 months of age. However, males are capable of siring a litter as young as 6 months of age, but this is not recommended. Males should not be allowed to roam as they may try to find females in heat to breed. Dogs can contract sexually transmitted diseases

and infections, just as humans can, which can lead to various health problems. Females may begin having heat cycles (in which they bleed from the vulva) as young as 6 months of age, but often later in Labradors. A heat cycle typically lasts from 20-30 days; she may become pregnant during this time if bred on any day even if she is no longer bleeding. A female is only capable of becoming pregnant during their heat cycle, and should be kept away from all male dogs at that time. A female may allow a much smaller or larger dog to breed her. When in heat, a female should be crated indoors away from male dogs or in a kennel with a fixed roof and dig-proof floor because males may try to get in with her. When taking a female in heat out to eliminate, she should be kept on a leash and watched at all times. It is prudent to watch her even in a fenced yard as males may climb over or dig under the fence to get to her. To keep your house clean when a female is in heat, have her wear a doggy diaper which you can purchase. We use Dr.s Foster and Smith size large fabric dog diapers and place a disposable feminine pad in as a liner, which should be changed often.

There are pros and cons to spaying and neutering dogs. **We recommend a female not be spayed until after her first heat cycle or 18 months of age, whichever is later. We recommend males not be spayed until at least 18 months of age.** Spaying and neutering before a dog reaches physical maturity can cause growth, and ultimately joint, problems; such as increased risk of hip and elbow dysplasia, and CCL tears. For more information about the pros and cons of spay/neuter read the following articles:

<http://www.caninesports.com/useful-info.html>

CCL Tear Overview: <https://healthyandhappydog.wordpress.com/cranial-cruciate-ligament-tear/>

Video on Early Spay/Neuter from a Vet: <https://healthypets.mercola.com/sites/healthypets/archive/2013/09/30/neutering-health-risks.aspx>

UC Davis Study on Golden Retrievers: <https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/golden-retriever-study-suggests-neutering-affects-dog-health>

Allergies:

To help prevent the development of allergies in your puppy, care should be taken to keep the immune system strong. A damaged immune system can lead to allergies, despite good breeding. Things to avoid: over vaccination, high and frequent stress, frequent exposure to insecticides and pesticides, overuse of flea and tick medications, smoke exposure, chemical-based cleaners, strong smelling or harsh laundry detergents, and air fresheners.

Hooded Vulva:

Some female puppies have a hooded vulva, one in which the skin around the vulva covers a portion of the vulva. Some puppies with this condition may develop urinary tract infections. We recommend giving the puppy Cranberry capsules daily to decrease the likelihood of UTIs. It is very important that puppies with hooded vulvas not be spayed before at least once heat cycle. It often resolves, or “pops out”, following her first heat cycle. Some vets who are not familiar with the condition will recommend corrective surgery. However, it is best to wait until after the puppy’s first heat cycle to see if it will resolve without surgery unless the puppy is having recurrent urinary tract infections.

Nail Care:

Dogs’ toe nails should be kept short. Excessive length of nails can cause growth problems in the feet and legs of puppies. Long nails can also cause arthritis to develop in the toes of older dogs. Nails may be trimmed with nail trimmers specifically for dogs or a dremmel type rotary tool with a sandpaper head. Nails should be trimmed often, about every two weeks. If nails become too long, trim small amounts every week until the desired length is reached. If your dog is kept on concrete often, nails may need to be trimmed less often, as concrete often keeps nails short.

Socialization:

It is important to properly socialize your puppy so that he or she will grow to be a confident, friendly adult. Have all your visitors pet and play with your puppy. After his last set of puppy vaccinations, take him to a park or stores where dogs are allowed. If you go to a place dogs are allowed before your puppy has received his last set of vaccinations, it is best to keep him off the ground/floor to prevent possible exposure to diseases. Introduce your puppy to other dogs and cats at a young age (keeping the puppy on a leash to control the situation). Take the puppy for car rides, other than to the vet so he does not associate riding with only going to the vet.

Training:

General: It is never too early to begin training your puppy. Start with treats and reward the puppy for learning “sit” and for coming when called. Keep training sessions with a puppy short, 5 minutes or so. Put a collar on the puppy soon so it becomes adjusted to it.

Housebreaking: Housebreaking a dog takes time and patience. It is likely that your puppy will have an accident in your house. In general, if you cannot watch your puppy, it should be crated or be outside to prevent accidents in the house. Never punish a puppy for having an accident because you were not watching him well enough to know when he had to go out. If you did not see him have the accident, but find it later, it is best not to punish the puppy as he will not understand, even if you put his nose in it. If you see the puppy in the act, speak a harsh “No,” then take him to an area you want him to eliminate and give him the command to “potty” or whatever you choose. When he does eliminate in the chosen area, praise him. It is also helpful to remove food and water two hours before bedtime to reduce the chance of the puppy needing to go during the night. Whether you use a crate or not, always contain your dog in a puppy-proofed safe area when you cannot supervise them. Many plants, cleaners, and human foods are toxic to dogs. Labs have a tendency to chew things, so ensure they cannot get to things you do not want chewed when unsupervised in your home or yard.

Crate Training: A crate is a useful tool for most dogs. It is a safe place for them to go when unsupervised at home and when traveling. To teach them a crate is their safe place, begin by feeding them in their crate. Do NOT use a crate as punishment for the dog, they will learn to dislike the crate. When beginning crate training, the crate should be just large enough for the puppy to turn around; many have moveable partitions that make the crate space adjustable as the puppy grows. Young puppies can “hold it” for up to about four hours. They should not be expected to “hold it” for a whole day while you work. If a puppy has an accident in the crate after being left for several hours, you likely left him/her too long. Dogs do not like to soil the areas in which they eat and sleep and typically only do so if desperate. Always allow a puppy/dog to eliminate before crating them. Say a command, like “kennel” when placing the puppy in their crate and they will learn to go in the crate on command. As soon as you let the puppy out of the crate after spending 30 or more minutes in it, take the puppy outside to use the bathroom. If the puppy does not use the bathroom within 10 minutes, re-crate him and try again shortly. Repeat as needed until the puppy has successfully eliminated outdoors. If you allow him back indoors too quickly without him eliminating, he is likely to have an accident in the house. At night, place them in their crate with a towel or dog bed to sleep on to make it a comfortable and desirable place to sleep. Puppies often cannot “hold it” all night long until they are several months old, so be sure you can hear the puppy wherever you choose to place the crate. Scratching and whining are signs the puppy needs to be let out.

Retrieving: If you would like a hunting dog or hunting competitor, we suggest you purchase a puppy retriever DVD and follow it to get your puppy off to the best start. Two good ones are Bill Hillman’s Training a Retriever Puppy and Sound Beginnings Retriever Training with Jackie Mertens. There are

several other good programs you can use after the puppy program such as, Lardy's Total Retriever Training and Evan Graham's SmartWorks. When planning to send a dog to a professional trainer, there is a common misconception, "I don't want to ruin the dog, so I won't do anything with it." Following this belief often leads to a dog that is difficult to train and keeps the dog from reaching its full potential. Whether you intend to train the dog your self or have it professionally trained, informal training should begin as soon as you bring the puppy home. Although we have already done the initial introduction, it is also a good idea to expose the puppy to gunfire often, at a distance, to ensure he does not become gun shy. We have also introduced the puppy to water, but the puppy will benefit from opportunities to swim. Take care not to make the puppy dislike water by forcing or throwing him or her into water. Begin using soft canvas bumpers until the puppy has finished teething, usually around 8 months of age.

Exercise:

It is important to exercise your puppy to keep him at a healthy weight and for good general health. Labrador Retrievers enjoy an active lifestyle. It is good to walk your puppy short distances everyday (less than 1 mile). It is not good to run or jog with a dog that has not fully matured on a regular basis or walk long distances, as this can cause joint damage. Also puppies should not be allowed to jump into and out of vehicles, elevated kennels, porches, and beds until fully matured. Your pup will not be fully mature until 18-24 months of age.

To help prevent CCL tears during retrieving and exercise, always warm up your dog before running, retrieving, or hunting. Warming up can include walking or doing figure eights through your legs. Always check for hazard in a field where your dog will be running, hunting, or training. Look for holes, ditches, and sharp sticks that could impale your dog. Avoid short retrieves when playing with or training your dog when they are no longer puppies; think throwing a ball or bumper from your side and the dog beside you. When a dog runs hard for short retrieves, there is generally increased torque on the joints as they try to stop and turn, increasing the risk of a CCL injury.

Transportation:

A dog should never ride loose or tethered in the back of a truck. Dogs can and will jump out of moving trucks. Also should you get into a wreck with the dog loose in the back, the dog will be thrown from the vehicle and injured. If the dog will ride in the back of the truck, use a crate and tie the crate down in the back of the truck to secure it. Always consider the weather outside when traveling with a dog in the bed of the truck. Heat is magnified when riding down a highway or parked in the sun, even in the back of the truck. Crating a dog in a secured crate, even inside the cab of a vehicle, is the best choice for the safety of the dog in case of a wreck.