



## Lagotto History in the United States

As told by LCA Secretary, Mel Sykes

The history of the Lagotto Romagnolo in the United States is really a "best guess." From what I know, and what is fairly well documented, the first person to bring a Lagotto into the United States was Betsey Laham. She, along with her husband, were AKC judges. Some years ago I read that she saw the Lagotto at the World Show, perhaps around 1997, and fell in love with the breed. She imported Truffie from Italy shortly after that show.



*"Truffie"–  
Best in Show  
Winner  
September 1999  
Handler is  
Betsey Laham*

In 1999 at an IABCA (International All Breed Canine Association) Show, Truffie won Best in Show. In a sad turn of events however, Betsey and her husband died

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## ...and now a word from our President

Letter from Judith Martin

Hi folks,

Welcome to Spring! Now that the weather is getting warmer, I hope to hear of more activities that you are participating with your Lagotto. As of January 1, 2008 the breed has been accepted by the American Kennel Club to participate in Performance Events such as Obedience, Rally, Agility and Tracking. I hope to hear soon of the first AKC titled dog in our breed. Your Lagotto must be registered with the AKC Foundation Stock Service program in order to participate in these AKC sponsored events.

If you haven't already done so, it would benefit all of us if you would register your Lagotto with AKC FSS even if you have no intention of participating in their events. In order to eventually become an AKC recognized breed, we need a large number of registrants with the organization. It is quite easy to register. You will need two photos of your Lagotto; one taken from the side of the dog, showing the profile or outline of your dog, and another taken from the front of the dog. You will need a copy of the pedigree/registration from the country you acquired the dog. It costs \$50.00 to register. If you have any questions, you may contact me for help.

There have been some questions from folks who purchased their Lagotto from Canada, the parents were Canadian stock, or they do not have the pedigree/registration. I suggest you call AKC Customer Care about registering your dogs at 919-233-9767. They will tell you what you need to complete the registration process. You may download and print the application form from the AKC FSS pages

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in an auto accident in the year 2000 in Florida. Truffie was then given to Gail Sherman. She and Betsey were good friends. When Gail became ill with cancer, she wanted Truffie to have a good home. At the age of eight, Truffie was then given to Margaret O'Donnell-Imle and her husband Robert, another friend of the original owner, Betsey Laham. They reside in Spokane, WA. Last year, Truffie died of kidney failure. She is a special dog to all of us, and her legacy in the United States will be forever remembered.



Truffie with Maggie Imle in 2007

Along about the same time, there were a couple others that became interested in the Lagotto. One is our very own Martha Schneider and her Gang. The other was me. Although we all have remained in touch, I can better tell you why I got involved and continue to be a promoter of the breed.

My wife Hilarie and I have been breeders of Cavalier King Charles for many years. I began to look for a larger; more sporting breed in the late 1990's and just happened upon some information about the Lagotto on the Internet. After doing a bit of research and deciding that this breed was worth a serious look, we imported our first female Lagotto from Italy, Olympia. She was not quite what we were hoping for in that she had been a kennel dog, and was quite shy. We sent her to a friend in Michigan, and then began to seriously pursue the qualities we really wanted.

After some other research and attempts at getting the "right" Lagotto, we purchased a male and female, but had still not begun a breeding program. We finally acquired a female from the Del Farnie Kennel in Italy. A lovely girl named Dina was bred to Lux, and in October of 1999, the first litter in the United States was whelped. Dina was the proud Momma of 7 puppies. She later received the R.O.M. (reproducer of merit award), and the del Tiglio Kennel was born. We produced our last litter for a time in 2003 with Dina and Nicco, and wanted to establish some better breeding stock.

It should also be mentioned that in the late 1990's, I began the Lagotto Romagnolo Group on the Yahoo

site. This has been a lot of fun, and has been wonderful to meet so many new enthusiasts. It has also provided the opportunity to develop a group of dedicated individuals who have taken us to the next level in beginning and official breed club for the United States.



Dina, with puppy, Biff

It wasn't until this past fall, in October and November of 2007, that we purchased Eppy (who arrived pregnant) and Espresso to help us re-establish our breeding program. In February 2008, we welcomed a new litter, and they were everything a Lagotto should be. Hilarie, at the same time she brought back Eppy, also escorted two other dogs for the owners of the Blackberry Farm here in Tennessee, where they have a truffle orchard. They were both trained in truffle hunting, Lussi, a 7-month old female, and Tom, a 5 year old male. While Thom is the "expert", Lussi is on-line to become a champ herself. These two also have the personality and look that we expect, and certainly would make any owner proud.

So, you can see we are all very new to the Lagotto in the United States. We continue to work towards the best quality and temperaments in our breeding program, and are encouraged, by the interest and dedication that we are seeing with our members, and hopefully, future members.

## Canine Hip Dysplasia

*From an article written in 1998 by: Tom Phillips, D.V.M., Ph.D. Associate Dean, Research Professor Virology College of Veterinary Medicine Western University of Health Sciences, reproduced with permission.*

Without going too deeply into the genetics, some basic genetic background is needed to explain how an OFA certified animal can produce off-spring that develops CHD. The following is a gross over simplification of the genetics of the CHD; but does provide a framework for understanding a problem with multiple gene control over a single trait. Dogs have two copies of each gene that controls CHD (the total number of genes that control or contribute to the development of CHD is unknown; but it is believed that many are involved). They get one gene from their mother and the other from their father. Some of the "good genes" can mask the presence of a "bad gene". In other words some of the "good genes" are dominant over the recessive

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## Truffle Hunting Training

*Adrina Trains in the Desert? – by Judith Martin*

Since we live in the Desert with little vegetation and rock hard ground, I wondered how I might ever train my dogs to hunt for truffles. Adrina is my 3 year old girl imported from Croatia. Of my 3 Lagotti, Adrina has the highest activity level, and drive to retrieve. She will retrieve sticks or toys as long as we are willing to throw them for her. In addition, she will search in an organized pattern for any object that she cannot see where it was thrown. We tend to pitch sticks out in the bush of our property to give her a challenge. She is very focused and will search until she finds the stick. If she is having a hard time locating the stick, she will follow our direction if we point and say "this way". Adrina is also a dog that never runs away from us on her own, and is very reliable on the command to "come". With all of this in mind, I decided that Adrina had the qualities of a good truffle hunting companion.

My main problem was how to take a mature dog and teach her to find something that is not native to our area, but also, in a place where there are no native trees (other than manzanita and small Scrub Oak) or appropriate soil for a dog to dig in. Since our location is so inhospitable and since Adrina had not been scent trained to the truffles as a baby. (See <http://www.lagotto.net/addestramento2.htm> for suggestions of how the Italians truffle train.)

My second problem was how to create a "truffle" for Adrina to learn to hunt. While in Italy I was given a small truffle from the Lagotto Club hunting trials. In order to preserve the scent, I wrapped it in about 1/4 cup of dry rice in a baggie. Later, I purchased truffle infused oil from Italy and had it sent to my home. (I also have a small bottle of truffle oil purchased from an Arizona specialty foods store). In addition, I ordered some Oregon blacks and whites from Jim Wells and have those in the freezer. My "truffle" is that packet of rice wrapped in the toe of an old sock. I then wrapped that in a small mesh bag. I put a few drops of truffle oil on the rice.



*The bag of "goods"*

on the internet:

<http://www.akc.org/pdfs/foreign.pdf>

It is my hope that someday we will have enough members and will be able to have annual events where club members and dogs can meet to learn more about the breed, have conformation and performance events. As a part of that, I hope we will have some truffle hunting trained dogs to compete in a club sponsored event of searching for truffles. There are two areas of the United States that produce good quality truffles. Jim Wells of Oregon Wild Edibles tells me truffles can grow in many places where there are natural oak trees, but most are not edible. Oregon and Tennessee are two places where the natural truffles are desirable and are either being cultivated or collected in the wild. I have been training my oldest Lagotto to hunt for truffles and hope to attend the Annual Oregon Truffle Fest next January. I have included an item in this newsletter on how I began training Adrina to hunt for truffles in the Desert SouthWest.

### *Truffle training- continued*

Thus prepared, I began my first training session. When I first showed it to Adrina, she took a sniff and simply did not respond. So much for instinct! In order to get her interested in this new thing, I started to tease her with it and then when I tossed it, she ran after it and brought it back to me. That was my first objective. My second objective was to get her to rely on her nose rather than her eyes to find something. I had never taught her to find hidden objects in the house so I was glad she was able to locate the objects as I started to hide them. I would close the door and go hide the object in increasingly difficult locations and then let her hunt for it with the command to "find" "truffle". (I use the names so that someday I can have her find other objects by name and scent.) This training session took about 10 minutes to accomplish the desired result. She loved the new challenge to find something.



*Hiding the bag under a rug*

Our second session took place outdoors. I started by hiding the object on the porch and then as she had 100% success, I started by making her stay and then hiding the object in more difficult locations. This session also lasted about 10 minutes. She loved the challenge and would have gone on for more but I wanted to keep the activity and interest level very high.

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"bad genes". Thus, the physical expression of the "good genes" will be result in good hips, even though the animal is carrying a number of hidden (recessive) "bad genes". When the sperm or egg is formed the two copies of each gene are separated so that sperm and the egg end up with only one copy of each gene.

In a case where an animal had a copy of one good gene and one copy of the bad gene, 50% of the eggs or sperm would get the "good gene" and 50% will get the "bad gene". Now recall that many genes are involved in the development of CHD, so this separation occurs for each of the genes that control hip joint development. Thus, a very few of the eggs and sperm will get all of the "good genes" and a very few will get all of the "bad genes" but most will get a mixture of both "good" and "bad" genes that control CHD. The outcome of a particular mating will be determined by the match up between the genetic make -up of the parents. If the bad recessive genes line up incorrectly then more of the puppies could have hip dysplasia. However, if the good dominate genes line up well then many of the pups will have good hips, but may still carry the hidden bad genes. Complicating the situation even further is that some genes may be good when combined with one set of genes and bad when combined with a different set of genes. It is also possible for some genes to have a greater or lesser influence on CHD than others, adding to the complexity of the problem. Thus, one can see that the genetics of CHD is very complicated.

Some puppies will have the same genetic combination as the parents. Some may have a more desirable genetic make-up than either parent; or others may have a less desirable genotype. Predictions of a specific CHD outcome from a particular mating are currently very difficult if not impossible.

However, it is OFA's opinion, that a dog with fair hips and less than 25% of its littermates exhibiting dysplasia is a better breeding prospect than a dog with excellent hips having more than 25% of its brothers and sisters affected by hip dysplasia. In other words, less of the bad genes are likely to be present where a smaller percentage of the littermates have CHD.

Ideally, we would want to achieve a homogeneous gene pool composition where the dogs carry two copies of the good genes for each gene that controls CHD. In other words eliminate the bad hidden (recessive) genes from the pool. This could be achieved by careful line breeding, making good hips part of that line's type. However, to accomplish this it is important to look beyond the individual animals of the proposed mating and consider the OFA status of

the littermates as well as other relatives on both sides of the mating before proceeding. It is also important to point out that a good dog is more than just good hips. Care must be taken that the breeding of dogs is not based only on one trait. Otherwise we may end up with dogs that have excellent hips but have poor temperaments, bad coats, no truffle hunting instincts, or other genetically related health problems. The whole animal should be considered with hips status being important but not the only consideration

It is easy to see why CHD is such a difficult problem to control. However, through careful breeding selections of OFA certified animals that have a low incidence of CHD in their littermates and in their pedigrees, we should be able to reduce, although not eliminate, CHD as a problem in the breed.

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Our third session objective was to start teaching her to dig. Of my 3 Lagotti, Adrina digs the least. I started the session by reviewing the "find" and "truffle" command and simply locating the object that was set in places where she might have to lift something to get at the object. I had a helper to hold Adrina while I hid the object. I suspect she had a scent trail and that gave her a clue where I hid the object. I put the object under things that she would have to move, then advanced to some leaf litter and then by digging a hole without burying it. The only place she missed was under a very thick heavy doormat that she could not move. We ended the 10 minute session by her finding the object under about 2 inches of dirt.



*Adrina searching*

Our next session will be hiding the object under deeper layers of dirt to see how she is able to detect the scent in the soil. Adrina just loves this challenge and I think she enjoys the activity. Try this yourself or if you develop other training methods, please share them with the rest of us.

## Spring Hazards for Your Dogs

By Lisa Dzyban, DVM  
ACVIM Diplomate

*NOTE: Although this article was specific to Washington State, the concepts and words can be applied anywhere.*

As Spring arrives in Washington, veterinary emergency clinics become very busy with warm weather "illnesses," which include bite wounds, infectious diseases (from hiking and going to the park), hit by cars and heat stroke. Heat stroke is a problem that people of Washington do not think of often because of our temperate climate and cloudy conditions, but dogs die in Washington every year from being enclosed in cars, sun rooms or outside without adequate fresh water. Heat stroke is especially a risk for puppies, senior or overweight pets, or dogs with brachycephalic faces (bulldogs, pugs or boxers).

Never leave your dog in a car or sun room, even with the windows open, a couple hours of sunshine can warm the area to dangerous levels! If a dog needs care while you are at work, day board them with a friend, neighbor, dog daycare or veterinary hospital. Signs of heat stroke include: collapse, seizure, extreme panting, bloody diarrhea and body temperatures over 104°F. If you suspect heat stroke has occurred, immediately take the pet into a cool area, ideally with cold air blowing directly into their face. Provide cool water to drink and thoroughly wet the animal with cool (not ice cold). Take the animal to a veterinarian immediately, even if it seems improved. Shock and dehydration have occurred and some pets can die of shock, sepsis or bleeding disorders even days after the event.

Enjoy the weather with your pet, but remember to keep them safe at all times! For further information in keeping your pet safe, enroll in a Pet First Aid course such as provided by the American Red Cross.

*Note from the Editor: Don't forget to protect your dogs' eyes from flying debris, sun and drying out. Here you see Guido in his fashionable eye wear while waiting for a ride in his owner's convertible.*



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