

National Labrador Retriever Breed Council (Australia)

POSITION STATEMENT

21st April 2010

Silver Coat Colour

The National Labrador Retriever Breed Council (NLRBC) is an officially sanctioned representative body responsible for dealing with any and all issues that may directly affect the integrity of our breed throughout Australia. A significant and important function of the NLRBC is to directly interact with and provide advice and make recommendations to the Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC) on all matters that it regards as significant.

The improved and ongoing health, structural soundness and welfare of the Labrador Retriever breed is a primary focus of the NLRBC as is the conservation of the original breed function – that of a “working” retriever. To this end the Internationally recognised “Breed Standard” (first developed in England in 1916) remains in force to this day.

An important part of that breed standard describes the three acceptable coat colours. Black, Yellow and Liver/Chocolate are the only recognised coat colours in our breed. Any diversion from these three standard colours indicates a cross breeding combination may have occurred.

Disturbing evidence has now been uncovered which suggests that some unscrupulous breeders in Australia may be considering promoting a new coat colour to unsuspecting Australian Labrador puppy buyers – Silver (or Platinum or Charcoal).

This concept is not new – for some years in the USA and more recently in New Zealand so called Silver Labradors have been peddled by “backyard/designer dog” breeders as being rare or unique. Not surprisingly this advertised rarity comes at a significant price both financially to the buyer and in health concerns to the individual dogs concerned. The sad fact is that these Silver Labradors are cross bred dogs – the result of crossing a Labrador Retriever with a Weimaraner.

Genetically these crossbred designer Labradors are at high risk of inherited structural and health defects. Neurological disorders such as epilepsy are widespread amongst “Silver” Labradors due to the inbreeding that is required to maintain the unnatural silver coat colour. These dogs also suffer debilitating skin and thyroid problems. It has also become evident that significant numbers do have problems with hip and elbow dysplasia due to generations of breeding from “untested” breeding stock.

The NLRBC has issued a Silver Coat “high alert” to all State based member clubs around Australia. If you require more information or you wish to report the activities of a suspected Silver Labrador breeder please contact the Labrador Retriever Club in your home state. They will be more than happy to assist you with your enquiries.