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Hip Dysplasia

What do we do to try to reduce Hip Dysplasia in our golden retriever pups? We believe there are five key elements to this puzzle and try to reduce the likelihood of dysplasia by attacking it on all five fronts.

Hip dysplasia is a genetic disease. Unfortunately, it is not carried on only one gene but multiple genes come together to produce the disease in any one animal. Therefore, there is no gene test that will tell us whether an adult is carrying the genes for the disease. Sometimes generations of goldens are fine and then through an unfortunate combinations of genes from the mother and father of the pup, an affected pup is produced.

That said, there are 2 ways we try to 'stack the odds' on the genetic end.

- 1) All adult dogs are X-rayed to see what their hips look like. We have used 3 different methods of checking the hips.
 - Dr. Malm has checked some of our animals at Bolton Veterinary Hospital. Dr. Malm has done many hip X-rays and is experienced in reading them. He must tell us that the X-rays are good to excellent or we will not breed that animal.
 - We submit our X-rays to OFA and make sure they pass OFA standards.
 - We have had PennHip X-rays done. Dogs that score at least average for their breed are used for breeding.
- 2) We get all available information about as many generations of animals in our dogs' pedigrees as we can. We interview breeders, use the K-9 database and keep track of information on our pups.

3) Nutrition

Recent research has shown that nutrition has a HUGE role in the joint health of pups. When pups grow too rapidly, they are inclined to develop hip dysplasia at much higher rates. Mary C Wakeman, DVM compared pups raised in kennels to those raised in private homes.

Over the years, our observations of the kennel populations...and their siblings living in private homes have led to the conclusion that there is no such thing as congenital unilateral hip dysplasia, but only acquired unilateral hip dysplasia. The kennel dogs, whose exercise opportunities are maximized, with several dogs of a similar age free to run and play all day and night in large paddocks, show us some interesting things.

- *They grow much more slowly, because much of their food intake goes into play and running.*
- *They rarely (almost never) suffer an injury.*
- *They always have symmetrical hip sockets, even if they are very shallow.*

Their littermates in private homes, where exercise is confined to an hour or two of intense play or jogging when their owners return from work, provide us with a different set of observations.

- *They grow very large, very fast.*
 - *They often suffer injury.*
 - *They frequently have hip sockets of different depths.*
- Copyright 2002, Mary C Wakeman, DVM on Breeder Vet.com*

The Golden Retriever Club of America's 1998 survey of owners found:

"The relationship between being overweight as a puppy or an adult and subsequently

developing hip dysplasia is also highly significant. Once again, being overweight as a puppy is a stronger predictor of developing hip dysplasia than is being overweight as an adult. For example, of the dogs that were overweight as a puppy, 31% subsequently developed hip dysplasia versus only 17% for those that were average weight as puppies. The comparable percentages for adults that were either overweight or average weight, as adults were 25 and 17%, respectively.”

- We watch our pups and limit their feed to encourage them to grow at a slow rate. We do not believe in fat and roly-poly pups. We feed Life's Abundance dog food.
 - Watch out for super-premium puppy chows that force pups to grow fast.
 - If not feeding a chow like Life's Abundance that is suitable for the entire lifespan of the pup, choose a LARGE-BREED puppy chow.
 - Do not overfeed. You want slow, steady growth over an extended period of time.
 - WE ALSO ASK THAT ALL PUPS BE SWITCHED TO ADULT FOOD AT 4 MONTHS OF AGE if you are not feeding Life's Abundance.
- 4) Avoid injury to the hips by avoiding all activities that stress the joints until the pup is AT LEAST a year. These activities include jumping unto the tailgate of a vehicle, climbing full flights of stairs, jumping for Frisbees or tennis balls, taking long walks on pavement or similar actions.
- 5) Spay or neuter pups later than it is traditionally done. Instead of 6 months, studies are showing that neutering after a year old (or not at all) helps to protect against some common cancers found in Golden Retrievers. Some studies show that the sex hormones are very important for balanced growth of the bones and joints.

Find more information on the health risks/benefits of spaying and neutering here:

<http://www.naiaonline.org/pdfs/LongTermHealthEffectsOfSpayNeuterInDogs.pdf>

and here:

<http://users.lavalink.com.au/theos/Spay-neuter.htm#s-n>