

# Litter Evaluations



## Checking Structural Conformation

Per Pat Hastings:

The only time you can evaluate a puppy for structure is  
+/- 3 days of 8 weeks or  
wait until they are fully mature and growth plates have fused.

You can check structure by stacking puppies  
& or watching them move when they are running around your home.

## Same Puppy!

*Moonlit Acres*  
Labradoodles  
From Our Home To Yours



### Proper Stack

3 days ~ 8 Weeks on an empty tummy, fresh  
Out of the bath and blow dry



### Improper Stack

8 weeks +1 Day FULL tummy  
4 days since last bath  
Front legs too far forward  
Rear legs not far enough back

## Structural Conformation

One of the most important first steps to stacking puppies is color coordinating with your puppies!

If you have darker puppies, consider wearing a white shirt  
If you have parti puppies, consider wearing something black

Ensuring that there is contrast between you and the puppy is super important for photo clarity!

# Structural Conformation

## Check list

1. Evaluate the top line.
2. Check for an ewe neck
3. Check for slipped hocks
4. Check for twisted legs, lagging leg, cow hock and or bow-legs
5. Tail Set: Saber or Curly?
6. Dangly Legs: Are they angling straight down, forward or backwards?
7. Check the body ratio: Body should be 50% and legs from the armpit to the ground should be 50%. If it's a dramatic difference, there is a good chance that your puppy has double copies of IVDD.
8. Check the front brisket. Is there substance there or is it narrow and or boney?
9. Tail set: Drop a line from the top of the tail bone to the table. Does the line drop on the front of the rear paws?
10. Shoulders: Does your pup have butter or are they rough?

# Structural Conformation

## Check list

1. Evaluate the top line.

## Top Line

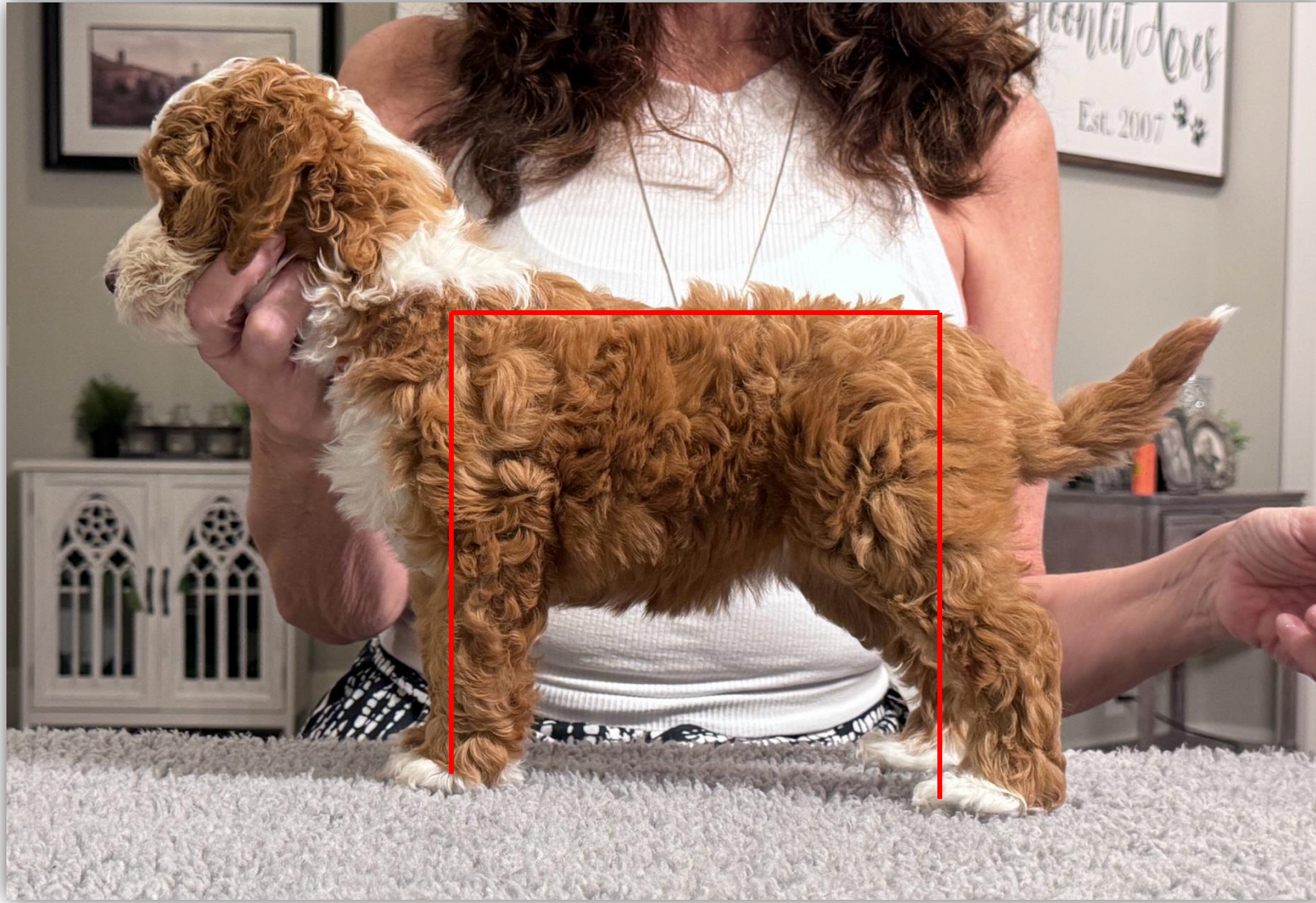
Your pups topline should be straight, and you should have a gentle slope from the top of the head to the beginning portion of the shoulders.

This pup has great spacing on the neck portion. And a very nice topline. If a pup has a compacted neck, it will have shoulder issues

If your pup has a sag in the middle, it's not good. If your pup has a hump in the back, it's called roached... it's not good. Breeding dogs with weak toplines will compromise how well your dog will age.

A dog that is not put together correctly usually will not age as gracefully as a conformationally correct dog.





*Moonlit Acres*  
Labradoodles  
From Our Home To Yours

**Square**

When positioning stack the rear legs first.  
Then make sure the front legs are directly under them and straight as possible

# Structural Conformation

Check list

## 2. Check neck

Strong Or Ewe Neck?

*Moonlit Acres*  
Labradoodles  
From Our Home To Yours



## Ewe Neck

Place your hand on your puppy's shoulders. Gently tip the head upward.

Your puppy's neck should not be able to go past 1 PM on a clock.

If it goes past 1 PM then your puppy has a ewe neck.

This puppy's grandmother could touch her nose to her butt. We bred her grandmother to boys with super strong toplines picked by Pat Hastings.

We were able to get rid of it with this girl's mother. It's not always that easy to get rid of though. But I let Pat pick the boys to be used with her.

# Structural Conformation

Check list

3. Check hocks

Stable or slipped?



### Slipped Hocks

(Not all puppies from the same litter are of the same quality)

I forgot to do a photo of checking rear hocks. Jazzy went home with her family earlier today. So, I had to use her sister. I did attempt to stack quickly so I could get this wrapped up I did not have my mirror up any longer. So did this blindly.

Not a great stacking job!

In this photo my hands are on her rear hocks. Apply pressure on the rear hocks if they bend easily then your pup has a slipped hock and will have a weakened rear end. Pups with slipped hocks do not age as gracefully due to the weakened backend.

If you keep a pup with a weak back end, find a boy with a **STRONG** back end.

# Structural Conformation

Check list

## 4. Check legs:

Twisted

Lagging

Cow hock

Bow-leg

Straight



## Check for twisted or cow hock legs

Stack your puppy and take a photograph from the rear.

Are the puppy's legs straight, slightly curved, bow legged?

You want straight!

Also does the puppy stand straight on its own or is it leaning to one side? If it's leaning it has a weakness either in the front or the rear.

If one leg is off to the side and the puppy doesn't leave its leg where you put it, then the backend of the puppy has an issue.

If your puppy stands there comfortably and doesn't move much and is super easy to stack, then most likely your puppy has GREAT structure. If they move a lot and you find yourself fighting to get the puppy to stay in the position you want, then it's not a comfortable position for that puppy and they are trying to get to a stance that feels good for them. I would NEVER keep a puppy that will not hold still on the table.

## Terminology

### Ewe Neck

When you have the dog stacked gently tip the head upward towards the ceiling. If the head freely moves past 1 o'clock then they have a ewe neck and the shoulders will not be as strong and could potentially cause your pup to not age as gracefully due to stiff, achy shoulders.

### Slipped Hocks

In a stacked position press on the rear legs if they give way easily then your pup can have what is called a slipped hock. The best way to prevent slipped hocks in puppies is to make sure they have ample room to exercise. Wobble boards are extremely helpful with proper development of puppies. It helps them to use muscles that they may not otherwise use at this age.

### Rear legs:

Here are four examples of rear legs. You want your pup's legs to resemble the dog on the top left. Anything else and you will have rear angulation issues and a weak backend.



CORRECT, STRAIGHT, NORMAL



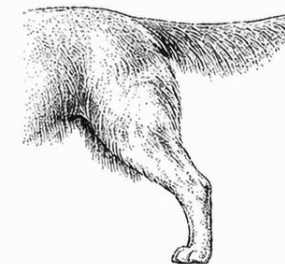
COW-HOCKED



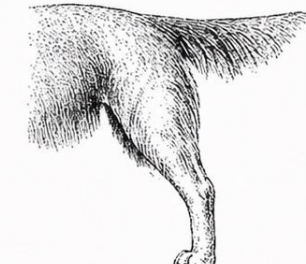
BANDY OR WIDE



NARROW



NORMAL ANGULATED  
HINDQUARTERS



STRAIGHT STIFLES

### Hindquarters and Hocks

# Structural Conformation

Check list

**5. Tail Set:**

Saber or Curly?  
Placement

## Terminology

### Tail Set

ALD's are comprised of 3 very different breeds and all of them have a different tail set. The breed standard for the Australian Labradoodle is a saber tail.



RING TAIL



SICKLE TAIL



SQUIRREL TAIL



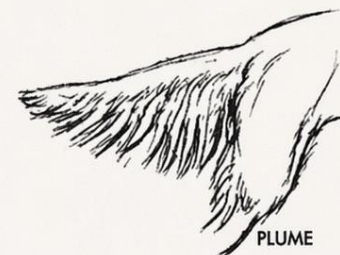
CRANK TAIL



SCREW TAIL



GAY TAIL



PLUME



OTTER TAIL

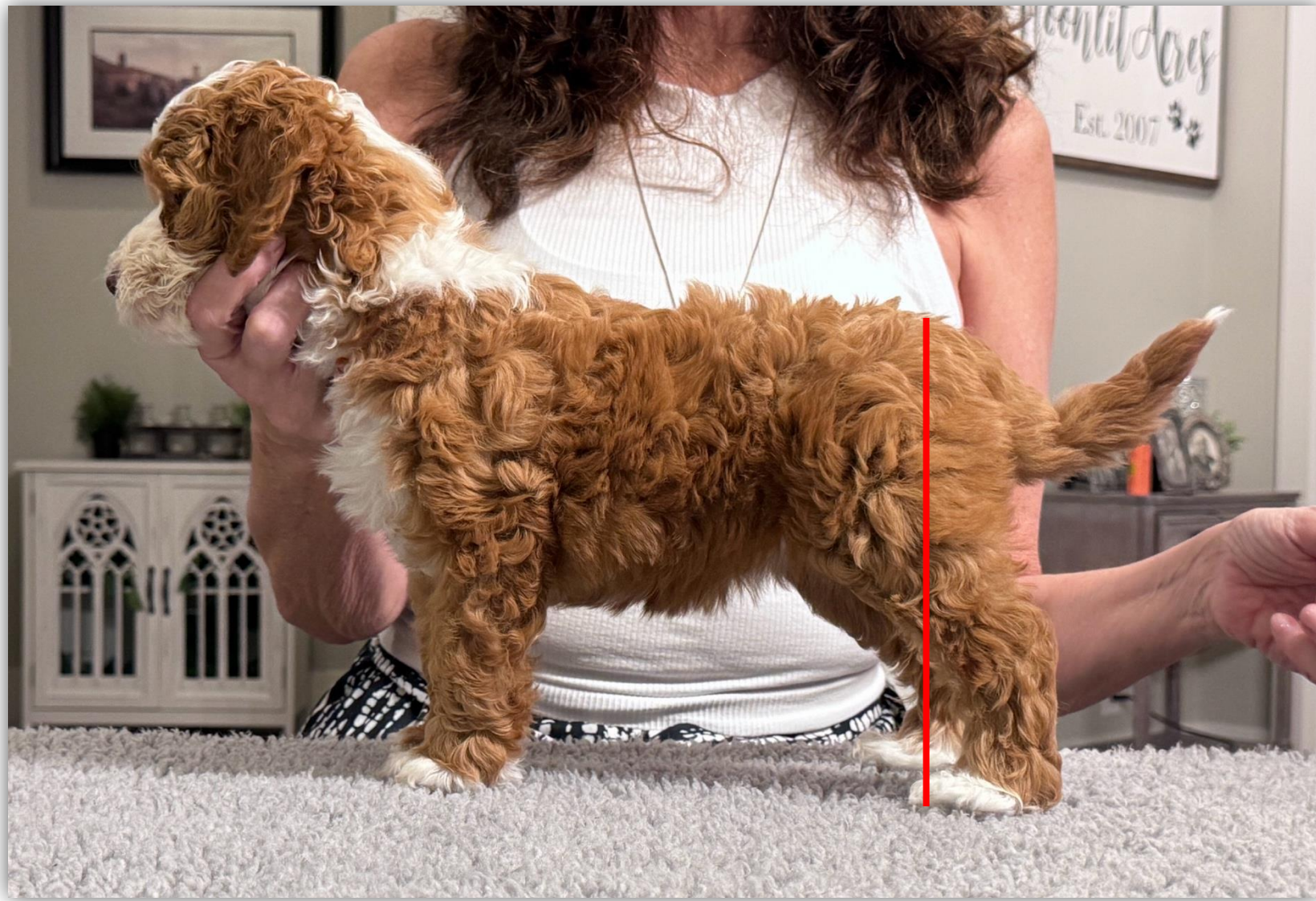


SABER TAIL

## Structural Conformation

### Check list

9. **Tail set:** Drop a line from the top of the tail bone to the table.  
Does the line drop on the front of the rear paws?



*Moonlit Acres*  
Labradoodles  
From Our Home To Yours

**Tail to Feet**

Draw a line from the top of the tail set to the ground.

The line should land on the front of the puppy's rear feet.

# Structural Conformation

Check list

## 6. Dangly Legs:

Are they angling straight down,  
Forward:  
Or backwards?

### The Dangly Test

Hold your puppy mid air.  
The legs will go one of three  
ways:

Forward, backwards or  
straight down.

You want them to dangle  
straight down.

If the legs are going forward  
or backwards you have a  
structural issue either on the  
front end or the rear end.

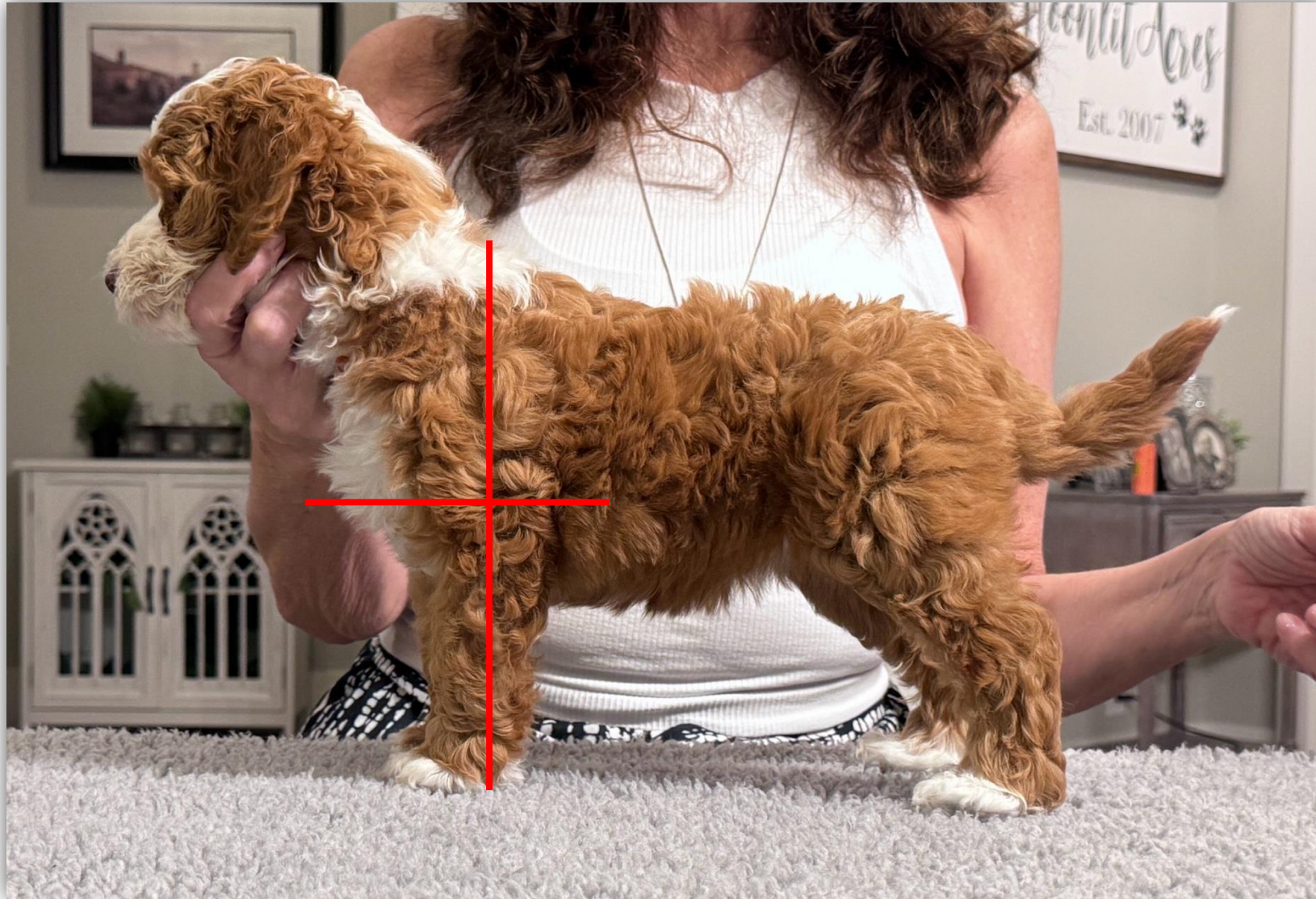


## Structural Conformation

### Check list

#### **7. Body Ratio**

Check the body ratio: Body should be 50% and legs from the armpit to the ground should be 50%. If it's a dramatic difference, there is a good chance that your puppy has double copies of IVDD.



*Moonlit Acres*  
Labradoodles  
From Our Home To Yours

**Leg to Body Ratio**

The body should be 50%  
& The Legs should be 50%

This puppy is close to 50/50

**Tips:** If your puppy has a thick fluffy coat, sprinkle some water on the topline and then comb the hair to help pat it down.

## Structural Conformation

### Check list

8. Check the front brisket.

Is there substance there or is it narrow and or boney?

## Structural Conformation

### Check list

#### 10. **Shoulders:**

Does your pup have butter or are they rough?



## Checking the shoulder blades.

Pat used to call shoulders ROUGH or BUTTER. You want BUTTER.

Stack your pup and feel for bones in the shoulders. If they feel sharp, then your dog has weak-rough shoulders. If you can barely feel the shoulder blades, then you have BUTTER.

Weak shoulders will affect how a dogs carry themselves and how graceful they age

## Terminology

### **Shoulder: Rough or butter**

This is a term that Pat Hastings used when referencing the shoulders of a puppy.

The best way to explain what this means is to ask you to close your fist. Run your hands over the top of your knuckles. If the shoulder bones feel knobby like the back of your knuckles, then your puppy has rough shoulders.

When you feel the shoulder blades, but you don't feel knobby knuckle bones then you have butter. In my experience correcting shoulders by selecting the correct pairings is one of the things you can correct in your litters very quickly. Some things take generations.... I have found when I pick the right boys I can correct shoulders very quickly.

# Structural Conformation

## Check list

### 11. Bite check

Bites are NON- negotiable. They cost puppy buyers a lot of money, can cause pain for the dogs and can give you a bad reputation.

If you are getting base line narrows, over or under bites from lines and can't seem to get it under control, I would suggest letting the line go. When I first started breeding ALD's like everyone I started with other breeder's lines. We had every issue you could imagine from temperament issues, coat issues, structural issues and bite issues. There were some dogs that we just had to cut from the program.

Bite issues are extremely challenging at times and can haunt you for multiple generations until you can get it under control. Meanwhile, while you don't have it under control you will have pet families with vets that are eager to rack up a dental bill and will want to start pulling teeth. Your puppy families will not think highly of you.

# MOUTH

Must be a scissor bite. Upper teeth to just overlap the bottom teeth.



**Scissor Bite  
Correct**



**Level Bite  
Less than Desirable**



**Undershot  
Incorrect**



**Overshot  
Incorrect**



**Base Narrow Canines  
Incorrect\***

*Base Narrow Canines or Lingually-displace mandibular canine teeth is a common malocclusion seen in puppies. It often corrects once the adult teeth erupt resulting in a scissor bite. However, since this is an inherited condition, it is not recommended to hold back breeding stock that display BNC as puppies.*

## TEETH - MINOR FAULT

Over or under-bite or crowding teeth

## Correct Bite

The bite we are all hoping for is called a scissor bite. However, it is very common for ALD breeders to be plagued with baseline narrow. Occasionally breeders will see underbites & overbites but not as often as baseline narrow. Baseline narrow is challenging to try to overcome and can take generations to finally get rid of it. Best advise I can give if you are buying a breeding prospect from a breeder ask the challenging questions. Be sure to ask if either parent has had bite issues in the line. Avoiding baseline narrow from the start when possible is always the best option.

Photo Credit:  
Courtesy of the ALAA

## Structural Conformation

### Check list

Be sure to check every puppy in the litter. If you are keeping a puppy, it is never a good idea to keep a puppy from a litter that has a bunch of bite issues or multiple puppies that are not structurally correct. It's always best to retain a puppy when most of the puppies in the litter are really very nice.

Always Check every puppy in the litter. You cannot properly evaluate your litter if you only stack the one that you think you want to keep. It's super important to know what your dogs are throwing.

## Structural Conformation

### Check list

No puppy or dog is perfect. Every dog even the best of them has a default. The pickier you are on what you keep and or bring into your program the stronger your program will become and the faster your program will improve.

Knowing what your puppy defaults are at 8 weeks gives you 18 months to find a suitable partner that will improve your puppy's imperfections.

The goal should always be, breed to improve the breed. We should be putting effort into the next generation of puppies that WE are bringing into this world to be better than their parents. This takes a concentrated effort.

## Structural Conformation

Pat Hastings was NOT always gentle. In the beginning I would set my litters up for her and I would tell her which cute little puppy I wanted to keep. Of course it was always the flashy pretty one. She would just smile and say, “We, will see”. More times than not she picked my “intended keeper puppy” to shreds... It hurt my feelings at times. Was it disappointing, ABSOLUTELY! But after she showed me why she was right I got it. I never went against her advise. She helped us setup our program for structure. It was the best investment I could have ever made.

Now... fast forward 10 years of breeding Australian Labradoodles and we have dogs with solid structure, great coats and fabulous smart, confident dispositions.

The process of cleaning up a program can be PAINFUL and COSTLY! Been there done that too many times to count! But when you start making the tough calls you will see improvement in your lines.

## Structural Conformation

The BEST advise I can give anyone buying a breeding prospect.....Buy from a breeder who can **SHOW** you what they have.

Ask the hard questions...

Ask for the video's showing free movement

Ask for the stacked photos

Ask for the health testing of the parents

Ask for the genetic testing on the puppy if the parents carry for something.

Many breeders do not know what they have or don't have and are selling puppies with the cute factor.

The expense of an ALD breeding prospect is for most, a large investment. Breeders that are selling breeding prospects for \$10-15K are asking for a professional wage. A professional presentation should be expected.

## Structural Conformation

There are exceptions to this rule... there are breeders that do not stack their puppy's. But they **KNOW** what they have!!

I would buy a puppy from a breeder that has the experience and knows what they have but does not stack. But there are only a couple of breeders that I would extend that latitude to.

So, knowing the reputation of who you are buying from is also super important.

# Litter Evaluations

