

From the Labrador Retriever Club of Northern Ireland – Year Book 1993

My Experience of Muscle Myopathy in Labradors

In 1988 Mr Peter Moxon wrote in Shooting Times that this inherited disease was present in Labradors.

My first case of Muscle Myopathy I experienced in 1990. A ten week old pup was sent to retrieve a ball, picked up the ball and on its way back to the owner, it collapsed. The vet sent a muscle sample to Edinburgh Veterinary College and Muscle Myopathy was confirmed. Prior to that some of this litter had to be put down as having hip dysplasia.

In 1992 I bred a litter from a bitch with a 3:3 hip score and a clear eye certificate. There were six puppies in the litter and all seemed to be doing well, except that I thought that they slept a lot and were slow to get up on their feet. At six weeks old they appeared alright. Their new owners came to see them and took photographs and videos. At eight weeks they went to their new homes.

I kept a bitch pup and after vaccinations were completed around twelve weeks, I noticed that she seemed to lick all her food, never chewing it and never finishing a meal, despite trying different types of food. The pup kept small, loved to swim but could not carry a small dummy. At five months old, while out walking through rough ground the pup collapsed. I thought she had broken her leg but she got up and followed me home.

A local lad who had bought a dog pup from the same litter asked me if I would take him back as his wife complained that he pulled the washing from the clothes line! Prior to this he and I had trained our pups together and I saw nothing amiss with him, although the owner said that the pup was a bad eater. Anyhow, I took him back and one day I had him out for a walk with the other dogs, he was romping around after them and then collapsed. I took him to the vet, who said he had never seen a case of Muscle Myopathy in dogs and knew nothing about it. The pup was put down.

My bitch pup had a bad attack retrieving down a steep hill and was put down at seven months old.

Another dog pup went to a lady as a companion and a watch dog. I met her when the pup was four months old and she told me that she had had to take him to the vet. He told her that there was nothing wrong with the pup and to give him calcium and cod liver oil as he was growing fast. After a week or so she was still not satisfied and took the pup to another vet in Belfast. This gentleman put the pup down, charged her £150.-- and gave her a letter to report me to the Kennel Club! This I never saw and she never sent it nor did she give the vet my name.

This hereditary defect is carried in the genes and if you breed dogs that have it on both sides a percentage of their offspring will be affected by it. It appears to be more prevalent in field trial dogs than in show dogs. Blood lines carrying this defect should be identified and with carefully planned breeding, it should be possible to limit the incidence of this disease if not eliminated it completely. So breeders, please help sort this out, do not sweep it under the carpet or we will be in danger of losing our great Labradors, which would be a tragedy.

I have put my experience on record, not to lecture, but in the hope that it may help someone else avoid the disappointment and heartbreak I have had.

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