

"Are your dogs English or American Labradors?"

I get asked this question every couple emails, by people curious about my puppies and trying to figure out what "box" to put them in. I usually have a short, one-paragraph answer I email back. This is the long answer.

There is only one breed. The Labrador Retriever. There are some breeds, such as Cocker Spaniels, where the breed has been split into two different breeds. Labradors have not done that. Labradors are only one breed. There are, however, a ton of different "types" of Labs within the breed, because Labs are very popular and everyone has their own version of what they like to look at, how much drive they want, what shades of coat they prefer, how they want the dog's head to look, etc.

Nearly all the Labradors in the U.S. were born in America. The only dogs that are technically "English" are ones that are born in England. All my dogs were whelped here in the U.S., and most were whelped at my house. Because of that, English vs American is really not the correct terminology. I know what a buyer is asking when they want to know English vs American. You want to know where my dogs land on that sliding scale of leggy/narrow/high drive vs short/squatty/blocky heads/low drive pets. It's not really the correct term though. The right way to ask it is "Do you have show dogs or field trial dogs?"

The following types of Labradors are present in the U.S.:

- Field trial/hunt test pedigrees - these are the high drive, lean, sometimes leggy dogs of unpredictable height (19" at the shoulders to 24"+ at the shoulders) and unpredictable weight (40lbs to 95lbs). They love to retrieve, and are used for a variety of performance events, from field trials to hunting to search and rescue, dock diving, agility, upper level obedience, etc. These dogs have pedigrees full of FC (field champion), AFC (amateur field champion), QAA (qualified all age), NFC (national field champion), and often MH (master hunter), HRCH (hunting retriever champion), and a variety of other GRHRCH, CFC, CNAFC, MNH, HOF, QA2, titles from venues such as AKC, UKC/HRC, and SRS. These dogs are often mistakenly called "American."
 - Field trial breeders do not, typically, own multiple generations of a particular pedigree. They buy the most talented dogs they can find and breed to other talented dogs. Field trial dogs are bought and sold on a regular basis. There are some stud dogs who stamp their "get" with a particular look, e.g. NFC Clubmead's Road Warrior offspring have a particular appearance. However, in general, you will not find that dogs from a particular field breeder all "look" or "act" the same.
- Conformation/bench/show bred pedigrees - these are the "blocky head", short, heavy, often low drive dogs that make great family pets. Some of these dogs are also used for hunting, obedience, scent work, rally, occasionally agility (preferred heights) and lower level hunt tests. The pedigrees are full of CH (show champion) and GCH (grand champion) titles, sometimes with designations such as Am CH (AKC show champion), Can CH (Canadian/CKC show champion), UKC CH (UKC show champion), Intl CH (IABCA show champion) titles. These dogs are mistakenly called "English."
 - Within this group, there a huge variety of "types" of show dogs.
 - "Specialty dogs" are ones that do well at AKC shows where only Labradors are entered. They are judged by Labrador Retriever "breeder judges." These dogs are the heaviest of the different varieties of Labrador Retrievers. Some will have huge Rottie or Newfoundland type heads. They usually have a lot of coat and short(er) legs. Pedigrees

will often have designations such as BISS (Best in Show Specialty) and MBISS (multiple Best in Show Specialty winner) written before the CH or GCH title. Those are not AKC titles, but they are prestigious enough accomplishments that breeders list them.

- "All breed dogs" are ones that do well at AKC show where all breeds are entered. These dogs are usually more "moderate" than the Specialty dogs. They usually have a little more leg, not quite as bulky, less coat, etc. Sometimes these all-breed dogs are not as "correct" in terms of conformation compared to the specialty dogs. They might not have "enough" angle to their front end, or not as "balanced" or not a perfect tail set, or other things that pet owners would never notice but we care about when we show and breed dogs.
- There's a group of dogs we sort of refer to as "working show bred" or "dual purpose." These are the dogs with CH titles on the front end, and MH titles on the back end of their names. They fit in the all breed category and many are not competitive at specialities. They may find it easier to get the MH title than the CH title. There are only 80ish CH-MH dogs in the history of the Labrador Retriever breed, and they usually all have common ancestors. For instance, CH Marshland Blitz did not have hunt test titles, but he appears in many of the CH MH pedigrees. Also, CH Windfall's Pipe Major did not have hunt test titles, but he sired multiple MH dogs and shows up in many pedigrees. CH Prospect's Slam Dunk UD MH and GCH Poplar Forest Play It Again Sam UD MH are both common names to see in these working show pedigrees, and both were moderate all breed dogs.
- Show breeders, unlike field trial breeders, do typically own multiple generations of their own dogs. Breeders who have been in the game for a few decades have developed a specific "look" for dogs that they've bred. Those of us who spend enough time in the Labrador world can identify dogs from a particular pedigree just based on appearance. Head type, ear set, tail set, shoulders, topline, etc.
- Performance dogs bred specifically for dock diving, or agility, or scent work, or service work. These usually have a variety of hunt test (JH, SH, MH, SHR, HR, HRCH, etc) titles somewhere in the pedigree. These usually have a splattering of dock diving, agility, rally, scent work, sometimes barn hunt, CGC, and therapy titles throughout the pedigree also. Sometimes there'll be a few CH titles. It's hard to put these dogs into a category.
- Backyard bred stuff. These dogs have few, if any, titles in their pedigree. The conformation, size, coat, temperament, etc is unpredictable.

Depending on what a buyer is looking for, some types of Labrador may be more appropriate than others. Are you looking for a dog to do USAR work on a FEMA task force? You really need to go the field trial route, not the specialty show dog route. Do you want a family pet who will spend most of its life on the couch? all of the show stuff will be a much better fit than the field bred dog.

OK, so what do *I* have? Well, I wrote all the above information because I have a wide variety of dogs. I have the straight show-bred dogs. I have the straight field trial- bred dogs. I have a lot of half-and-half and 3/4 show dogs. I'm working on dual purpose pedigrees because I want CH MH and hopefully someday, CH QAA or even the elusive FC CH (dual champion).

For example, if you look at my page (current and past dogs):

My show bred dogs (the ones you are asking about with the "English" terminology) are Chivas, Brie, Frieda, and Elle. All of these are all-breed dogs. Only Elle has a CH title. Brie may have been competitive had we shown her years ago.

My field trial bred dogs (the ones you're asking about with the "American" terminology) are Tara, Holly, and Allie.

My half show and half field dogs are Rush, Delta, and Poppy. Rush and Poppy are sired by a CH from a speciality pedigree. Delta is sired by a dog from an all breed CH pedigree.

My 3/4 show, 1/4 field trial dog is Scout. The show portion of her pedigree is speciality dogs, some with hunt test titles.

Previous 1/2 and 1/2 litters are: (1st generation) Tara x Caleb 2019, Tara x Jett 2020, Holly x Kayak 2018, Allie x Norman 2020, and (2nd generation) Rush x Delta 2021.

Previous 3/4 show litters are Delta x Arlo 2021, Poppy x Demo 2021, Rush x Chivas 2022, Chivas x Arlo 2022.

Most of the litters I'm doing right now are 3/4 show, moderate body type, with more of an all-breed look. They're usually moderate drive. They do great in hunt test, hunting, agility, obedience, rally, etc homes. They aren't field trial prospects. Every now and then I'll have some with drive that could play USAR. Most fit great in active pet homes.

Hopefully that helps explain what I have, and if I don't have what you are looking for -- hopefully that gives you more information to help talk to the next breeder.

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