

Doodle Dogs, Part 1

Written by Janet Goodman, BT Contributor
April 2018

These hybrids are all the rage



Ten-year-old Emily Diaz is a fifth-grader at Miami Country Day School. She owns a lively 50-pound chocolate-brown Labradoodle named Chloe.

“My dad got Chloe because he wanted a social, playful female, not a grump that sits in the corner,” Emily tells the *BT*.

Her father, Miami attorney Michael Diaz, knew someone with a Labradoodle and liked what he saw. He found Seaspray Australian Labradoodles online, a Tampa Bay breeder that sells pups for \$3000. Chloe was born at Christmastime 2016 and at eight weeks was sent to stay with a trainer who gave her some basics before coming home.

The puppy’s energy is often a plus, but things quickly go south if she has no outlet. Even a leg fracture at six months didn’t slow her down. “Chloe likes to run along the beach when we’re in the Keys and chase after balls,” says Emily. “At Waggle Bros. [the Biscayne Boulevard spa], she’s friendly and plays with other dogs. She can be really tired and still wants attention.”

Doodle Dogs, Part 1

Written by Janet Goodman, BT Contributor
April 2018

Her watchdog instincts are good, too, but when she's stressed, she gets into mischief. She's been known to nibble on wall moldings and toilet paper.

For the past year the family has hired this writer to walk her once a day for a chance to work off steam. Everywhere we go, passersby stop and remark how beautiful she is.

But this breed isn't for everyone. "Labradoodles are only for active people who can exercise their dogs," says Emily.

Labradoodle is a type of "doodle" dog -- what you get when you cross a poodle with another breed. Cockapoo, maltipoo, and schnoodle are examples of poodle mixes. But the Labrador retriever/poodle hybrid is different. Many consider it to be a purebred, although Labradoodle isn't recognized as a standardized breed by any major kennel club. It's the result of purposeful breeding of Labrador to Poodle, or F2 hybrids; breeding this way over many generations (multigenerational) produced the Australian Labradoodle.

Australia is considered the birthplace of the Labradoodle. In 1988, Australian breeder Wally Conron began creating a breed suitable for guide work, from crosses of Labs and standard poodles. Today these dogs come from breeding with miniature and toy poodles as well. Some breeders add spaniel or terrier to the mix.

Charlie and Bonnie Green of Keystone Point have a cream-colored multigenerational Labradoodle named Ozzy. They previously owned a cockapoo, but when they were ready for a new dog, they went searching for a Labradoodle. "Charlie wanted a larger dog -- one that didn't shed. We saw our neighbor's son walk a Labradoodle and thought the size, the temperament, and the look was superb," says Bonnie.

The Greens found House of Doodles of Port St. Lucie online. "At first, Ozzy was already spoken for, but the breeder's sale fell through. The day we visited him, we saw him interact well with other dogs. There was a thunderstorm, but he wasn't skittish at all." When he was ten weeks old, they brought him home, and in the five years since, Charlie has done private and group obedience classes with Ozzy.

Doodle Dogs, Part 1

Written by Janet Goodman, BT Contributor
April 2018

Bonnie knows her dog's range of qualities: "He's loyal and loving. I never had a male dog so nurturing, so cuddly like a female. He's gentle and just the sweetest with kids. But he's also OCD. Going in and out of the back door, he's got to have a toy in his mouth."

At Haulover Beach, the dog is obsessed with his retrieval decoy. He's happy only until another dog picks up his toy. Swimming is his thing, and the rougher the waves, the better to smack them down. Three times a day the couple take him for mile-long walks. "If it weren't for Ozzy, I wouldn't walk or go to the beach," she confesses.

Drying off the dog at the beach is a thing of the past. "He embarrasses me when he humps the towel," she jokes, and at home, socks and underwear get wadded up in his mouth, but he doesn't destroy them. Like many dog owners, they've accepted his quirks with open hearts.

Two years ago, Ozzy began experiencing digestive issues and was diagnosed with Addison's disease, a condition sometimes seen in Labradoodles. The Facebook support group *Addison Dogs -- Canine Addison's Disease* has been instrumental in getting a handle on his health and learning that Addison's is treatable.

They've found the right amount of steroidal treatment, a mere one milligram of prednisone daily, just enough to replace his body's missing cortisol. A low-fat diet helps keep symptoms in check, and they have his bloodwork done twice a year.

In a 2014 interview, that Australian breeder, Wally Conron, said he regrets starting the Labradoodle trend. "For every perfect one," he said, "you're going to find a lot of crazy ones."

With Addison's under control, would Bonnie still recommend Labradoodles to other families?

Her answer: "Absolutely."

Doodle Dogs, Part 1

Written by Janet Goodman, BT Contributor
April 2018

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com