

Chocolate labs plagued by consumer-driven ‘genetic bottleneck’

New research shows that chocolate Labrador retrievers are more likely to experience health problems and die younger compared to their black and yellow canine compatriots. A likely reason, say scientists, is a tightening genetic bottleneck caused by consumer demand.

Chocolate-colored Labrador retrievers have a 10 percent shorter lifespan than black or yellow Labradors, according to [research](#) published [October 22] in Canine Genetics and Epidemiology. Chocolate Labs are also more prone to health problems, such as ear and skin infections, and joint conditions.

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The gene for the chocolate color, unlike the genes for the black and yellow color, is recessive in Labradors, which means both mom and dad have to be chocolate-colored to produce the trait in pups. This dramatically narrows down the gene pool, leading to loss of genetic diversity and the onset of genetic bottlenecks.

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The average lifespan of Labrador retrievers was found to be 12.1 years (which is lower than the previously estimated 12.5 years), but chocolate-colored Labradors had a 10 percent shorter lifespan than black or yellow Labs, typically living to around 10.7 years.

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In terms of what can be done to remedy the situation, Labrador retrievers from other parts of the world could be introduced to diversify the gene pool. Or more practically and humanely, prospective owners and breeders should stop fixating on chocolate-colored Labs—or just [forgo purebreds](#) altogether.

Read full, original post: [Demand for Chocolate Labs Is Making Them Sick and Prone to Early Death](#)