

# Dogs NZ Litter Registration Limitations (LRLs) FAQs

## I. Why is Dogs NZ promoting the LRL system for breeds?

Dogs NZ view the LRLs as extremely important for two key reasons;

- a) It will lead to health and welfare improvements in the breed.
- b) It clearly illustrates that our breeders are taking major steps to demonstrate commitment to guardianship of their breeds.

The LRLs demonstrate 4 key strengths:

- a) Peer reviewed (testing modalities),
- b) Relevance (diseases tested)
- c) Compulsory (the entire breed is involved)
- d) Transparency (results printed on pedigree certificates)

These four key strengths are communicated to external stakeholders at every opportunity and provide us with the ability to protect those breeds when dealing with any general public concern around the breeding of pedigree dogs.

LRLs are club driven for numerically strong breeds, but can be breeder or owner driven for smaller numbers.

## II. What is an LRL?

An LRL is a mandatory health testing requirement applied to the sire and dam of a litter of puppies prior to registration of that litter on Part I of the Register.

## III. Who does the LRL apply to?

Once an LRL is in place, it will apply to every litter of that breed. It is a mandatory requirement to all breeders of that breed and there is no opportunity to 'opt out'. A litter of puppies will not be registered by Dogs NZ if the breeder does not comply with the required testing.

## IV. Who initiates a Litter Registration Limitation(s)?

LRLs are club, breeder or owner driven. Requests for an LRL must come from the relevant Club(s), or where no club exists for that breed by the registered breeders of that breed.

## **V. What to include in the proposal?**

- List the proposed health tests answering the criteria as listed below in VI.
- State who is supportive of an LRL (is there known Club and significant membership support? How can this be verified?).
- State why the Club(s) want an LRL, why is it important?

## **VI. What tests should be included?**

After an LRL request has been received, the Canine Health and Welfare Committee (CHWC) will consider if the requested tests are:

- Scientifically validated
  - Are there published peer-reviewed tests available?
- Relevant to the breed
  - Does it occur frequently in the breed internationally?
  - Does it have a serious effect on the health and welfare of the breed?
- Reliable
  - Is the mode of inheritance clearly understood?
  - Is the testing sufficiently objective?
  - How can test results be reviewed to monitor effectiveness of the scheme?
- Readily available
  - It is easily accessible or geographically restricted?
  - If restricted how do we ensure that breeders can access?
- Cost effective
  - Is it reasonable to require breeders to do the test?
  - If there is more than one test an aggregation of costs must be considered.

## **VII. Should the test just be performed, or meet a certain criteria?**

Certain DNA tests where the gene is of low frequency but high impact and requires one parent to test 'clear', will mean that no matter the other parent result, there will be no 'affected' offspring.

Currently there is insufficient data available for New Zealand specific physical test scores (such as hips, elbows, eyes, cardiac, BOAS etc) so initially the LRL should act as a data gathering exercise. Scores may be a consideration once an established database of results is available and upon the request of the breed clubs or where there is no breed club by the majority of registered breeders of that breed.

## **VIII. Once a proposed LRL is drawn up, what happens next?**

- Submit the proposed LRL with signatures from Club(s) secretaries to the Director/Secretary. If there is no specialist breed club for the breed, then proposals from individual breeders can be accepted.
- The Canine Health & Welfare Committee (CHWC) consider the proposed tests using the criteria in section VI and how they can be incorporated into the Registration Regulations. Any suggested amendments are communicated back to the Club(s) for further comment.
- Only when the Club(s) and CHWC are satisfied the proposed LRLs meet required criteria, are they converted to draft Registration Regulations.
- Executive Council (EC) then approve and sign off the initiation of a survey process.
- The proposed LRLs are advertised in 2 consecutive Dog World Magazines calling for submissions.
- Submissions are considered by CHWC and any necessary adjustments are made in full consultation with the Club(s).
- There are NO changes made without agreement from the Club(s).
- The final proposed Registration Regulations and survey date are published in the next available Dog World magazine, sent in Dog iE news, and direct emailed to all current financial breed owners.
- The Survey is open for up to 21 days.
- A minimum of 75% participant agreement is required to accept the LRL.
- Further, a minimum of 75% participant agreement is required to accept each individual test.
- EC ratify final result.
- Members notified by Dog World, Dog iE news and direct email, of result
- Within 4 months the LRL will be embedded in the Registration Regulations and tests must be completed prior to registration of litters.

**IX. What happens if a test needs to be changed?**

If a Club(s) believes that a test needs to be changed in any way; for example, added, deleted, amended or limits on results put in place, then this will follow the same process as outlined above.

If the CHWC receives information that indicates that a test should be changed, it will first consult with the Club(s) to reassess the current criteria. No change will be made without consent from the Club(s) and strict adherence to the process as outlined above.

**X. Do tests need to be completed in a set timeframe before the mating?**

Yes. This can be dependent on the LRL, for example the Labrador LRL states in 10.13.3 “The Sire and Dam of every litter must hold a current annual eye certificate from an approved...” To be current, means within 12 months of breeding, the dog should have completed an eye certification. It does not need one EVERY year, just within 12 months of breeding.

DNA tests and other lifelong tests such as hips and elbows should be completed at some stage prior to the mating.

**XI. Is the success of an LRL monitored?**

The Dogs NZ health database stores all information from every health test result entered.

This will allow the analysis of data by Dogs NZ and its research partners to interpret results and provide research reports to breed clubs on any trends or improvement in current breed averages, gene prevalence etc.

IMPORTANT: This data will always be in an anonymous, statistical form and individual breeder details will never be given.

It will only be used for the purpose that it was collected for and will not be shared with other third parties without the express consent of the breeders.

**XII. Should all breeds have an LRL?**

Ideally yes. It illustrates the commitment from breeders to ensure the ongoing health of their breed.

However the Breed Clubs as custodians must be the basis for the commencement of this process. They will do so on a timeframe that reflects member support for an LRL.

### **XIII. What about frozen semen?**

Frozen semen recognised as an extremely valuable tool to maintain and improve genetic diversity in a geographically isolated country such as New Zealand.

It is therefore, important to allow the continued use of frozen semen within any LRL. If the semen is very old or the dog is deceased preventing physical tests from being carried out, automatic dispensation will be applied for those tests.

DNA diseases and genotypes can be run on frozen-thawed semen. This can be sampled at the time of insemination as both the drop to assess motility and the empty straw/vials are able to be utilised by DNA laboratories to extract DNA.

If for some reason the DNA cannot be extracted, a dispensation will be given.

For imported frozen semen where the dog is still alive, it is generally expected that the tests should be performed. Dispensations can be considered on a case by case basis by the CHWC, if for example, a test is not routinely performed in the country of origin.

It is important to take all practicable steps to ensure that the use of semen does not create an increase in the disease which is being tested for by the LRL.

### **XIV. How does the LRL scheme differ to the Accredited Breeders Scheme (ABS)?**

The ABS scheme is voluntary and focused equally on health testing and animal husbandry. The ABS scheme includes more testing under 'optional' and 'to be aware of' categories.

The ABS provides a pathway for those breeders who wish to commence and receive recognition through Dogs NZ for their testing regime. This will be pertinent where Clubs have not entered into an LRL process or where the breed itself is small and the breeders have not chosen to enter an LRL.

This makes the LRL more powerful as it is compulsory for all breeders of that breed. This means a rapid and transparent change can be made in the breed.

For example, in one generation of LRL tested Labradors, there have been no dogs clinically affected by EIC, PRA-PRCD and Dilute. From August 2019, there will be no more Rottweilers clinically affected by JLPP.

These are highly significant health achievements by these breeds.

**XV. Who can see the LRL test results?**

Results are stored in the dogs Pedigree information in the Registry. These can be seen only by financial members of Dogs NZ when they complete an online pedigree search using their membership log in details.

The UK Kennel Club have results available to everyone. Dogs NZ have elected to make this available only to current financial members.

Results that are lifelong will be printed on Pedigree Certificates. Those tests which are annual (such as eye certificates) can be printed as a 'current health certificate'.

**XVI. Some of these tests cost a lot of money? What is the advantage to me to do them?**

The tests which are included in an LRL are expected to have significant impact on the health and welfare of the breed in New Zealand. The total cost of the tests (including how accessible it is to all breeders, as well as the actual cost of the test) must be counterbalanced by the economic value it adds to the breed.

For example, an important requirement for an MRI for Syringomyelia (SM) in some breeds would likely not be included in an LRL because the price is well over \$1000 per dog and the accessibility is extremely limited.

Given the current trend of consumers to be increasingly aware of the health issues and associated costs of dog ownership, we can expect to see an increase in demand for puppies from health tested parents and a corresponding increase in the value of those offspring.

The LRL is a tool which allows Dogs NZ on behalf of its members, to argue that because we have a robust internal health testing system in place, heavy handed external regulation by government is not required to deal with animal breeding health issues.

This in turn has the potential to create a point of difference and develop the opportunity to place Dogs NZ breeders as the preferred supplier of pedigree puppies.