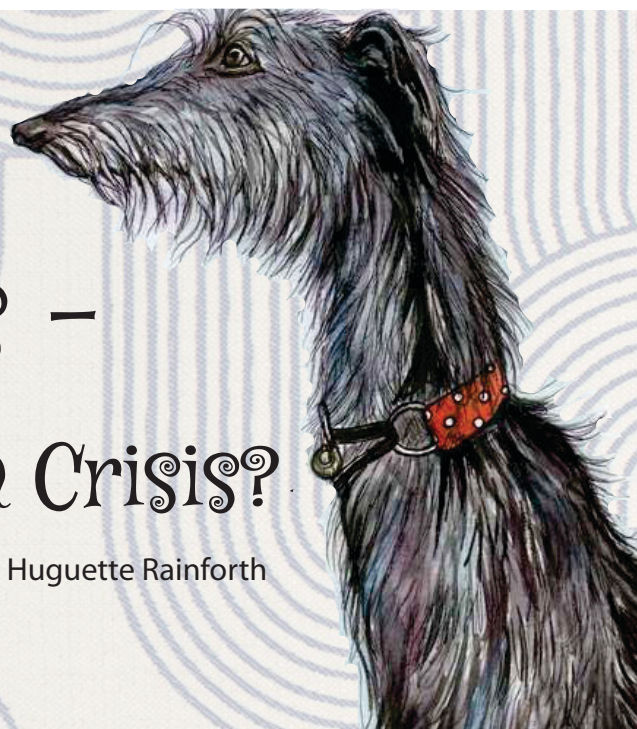


Designer Dogs – Are Purebreds in Crisis?

by Huguette Rainforth



What prompted me to research and write about this was an email sent to a responsible Club member-breeder and Guylaine Gagnon, the IWCC secretary, from a man asking about Woofadoodles. He said that he and his wife fell in love with the breed when an IW came up and befriended them while touring an old castle in Ireland. As he researched the IW, they learned that their life expectancy was relatively short at 6-8 yrs. (*updated Feb. 19, 2021 to 6-10 yrs*). Recently someone had mentioned an Irish Wolfadoodle to them, and his question was, "Is this an alternative or a designer dog that should never have been designed?"

I know that Labradoodles and Goldendoodles exist, but I was horrified to discover that there are 541 different recognized combinations of mixed-breed Designer Dogs!

I found over fifteen different mix-breeds with one Irish Wolfhound parent, and to top that off; I saw a picture of an IW Pointer cross, posted on FB with LIKES and comments from IW owners!

I also checked the CKC web and found, to my great surprise, that they recognize and register Designer breeds, all be it clearly identified as "Non-Purebred" on their puppy-registration application and registration certificate.

The problem with hybrid dogs is that they fast became popular, and when a dog gets very popular, the wrong types of breeders get involved. Backyard breeders and unscrupulous people set up "horrific" puppy mills, selling their puppies on the internet. Sadly, while aiming just for the almighty dollar, many hybrid dogs are mass-produced; dogs are over-bred, causing careless breeding without paying attention to health or temperament. Puppies poorly socialized and often removed too early from the litter may result in serious behaviour problems down the road! I would say 'buyer beware' to people who believe designer dogs are the best of both worlds. Since 50% of the genes come from each parent, faults will automatically be passed on to puppies from either or both parents.

Historically, the dog class has been divided into pure breeds and mixed breeds.

The **Mutt** of uncertain ancestry is a mixture of many genetic traits and may have any combination of his ancestors' characteristics. The potential for variety in appearance, conformation, and temperament is endless.

The **Mixed-breeds** are the result of breeding different purebreds or other mixed-breed dogs together. They are primarily from accidental matings, have no pedigree, and are not registered. Mixed breed dogs often superficially resemble a purebred. They can inherit all the best or the worst traits of their parents. It is difficult, if not impossible, to predict what a mixed breed dog's puppies will look like or how they will behave.

The **Hybrid** is the offspring of two purebred dogs being crossed. Unlike purebred dogs, these dogs do not breed true; this means that, like a shot in the dark, if you will, when you cross two purebred dogs, you will likely be getting a puppy with mixed traits that cannot be reliably predicted. Not all of these designer hybrid dogs are 50% purebred to 50% purebred. It is very common for breeders to breed multi-generation crosses. Therefore, you can expect to see any combination of characteristics found in either of the parent breeds.

The Designer Dogs: How it all Began

Wally Conron, an Australian dog breeder, now 90, while working for *Guide Dogs Victoria*, invented in 1989 the first Labradoodle, a Labrador retriever and poodle mix, as a guide dog for a blind woman in Hawaii whose husband suffered dog allergies.

The union produced three pups. The blind woman's husband was not allergic to only one of the pups, a dog-called Sultan. Then there was the problem of the remaining two puppies. No one seemed to want them. Mr. Conron went to his organization's public relations department and urged it to tell reporters that the group had created a "special" hypoallergenic guide dog breed. Within a matter of days, he said that he realized what he had done. He went to the big boss of *Guide Dogs Victoria* and said, "I've created a monster. We need to put a patent on the name to stop people from getting on the

bandwagon. “We need to do something about it to control this.”

In an interview with *Psychology Today*, Mr. Conron acknowledged that the ‘oodle’ name was a gimmick that went global.

In another radio interview, he said, “I opened a Pandora’s Box and released a Frankenstein’s monster.” “I’ve done a lot of damage. I’ve created a lot of problems.” “People ask me, ‘Aren’t you proud of yourself?’ I tell them No! Not in the slightest. I’ve done so much harm to pure breeding and made many charlatans quite rich.” “I wonder, in my retirement, whether we bred a designer dog — or a disaster!” “They made smart dogs into crazy mutts! That is the truth of it. They are very overpriced mutts. And I’ve been bitten by ‘doodle’ dogs the most!”

Labradoodles and Goldendoodles became very popular because they are marketed as hypoallergenic, non-shedding, and odour-free — something that attracts many allergy sufferers. This sales pitch brings in lots of interest because people think they are dealing with some wonder dog. The truth is, no dog is totally hypoallergenic as the causes of allergies may vary from one person to another. There are many causes of dog allergies that go past the fur. Hybrids are like genetic wild cards; you cannot reliably predict their hypoallergenic, non-shedding coat qualities. Out of 10 puppies in Wally Conron’s second litter of Labradoodles ever born, only 3 had non-allergenic coats.

Purebred Wolfhounds versus Designer Wolfadoodles

By definition, a purebred Irish wolfhound is a dog who has been selectively bred over many generations to “breed true.” Breed standards were crafted so that breeders (hopefully!) follow specific guidelines to ensure their purebred dogs follow the ideal description of the breed. Keeping a breed as close to the standard as possible, you avoid over-exaggerated traits like German Shepherd’s rear angulation, Bulldog’s wrinkly face, Bassett hound’s extra-long ears, etc. that have been new breeding criteria over the years. With a purebred, you know to a reasonable extent what you will be getting, size, coat type, colour, temperament, etc. These traits make dog breeds so valuable to us; they come with that unique look we have enjoyed throughout the years. The Irish Wolfhound is one breed that has remained constant for decades.

A “wolfadoodle” by definition is a wolfhound-poodle mix. I would not call it a designer dog. What is the point of breeding two dogs that have nothing in common? If it is for life expectancy, do not be fooled, there are no guarantees. Every breed has a genetic skeleton in the closet. Most designer dog breeders do not “test” their breeding stock. Since 50% of the genes come from each parent, there is no guarantee how the puppies will turn out. One bad gene somewhere along the line, and your dog might have picked up some aggression or other equally feared defect.

Let’s take for example: an untested wolfhound, prone to heart disease, bone cancer, and gastric torsion, is cross-bred with a standard Poodle whose’ most common health concerns are hereditary problems such as hip dysplasia, cancer, Addison’s disease, and gastric torsion but can also experience thyroid issues, progressive retinal atrophy, eyelid problems, cataracts, epilepsy, ear infections, and skin problems. The chances are that you may end up with puppies prone to any of these conditions.

The wide range of health problems your new designer Wolfadoodle might experience later in life will also be unique. Your Veterinarian will not have any preliminary list to consult

when trying to diagnose your dog. If you buy a purebred IW, you can be assured that your vet will have a long list of possible diseases that are common in the breed.

Hybrid dogs are not necessarily the healthy, wonderful dogs with terrific temperaments they are often portrayed to be. Claims by unethical breeders stating that hybrids are healthier and get the best of both worlds from their parents are unfounded. It’s a nice story, but tell that to a geneticist, and he will laugh.

A new study on the prevalence of inherited disorders among American mixed breed and purebred dogs has negated the common assumption that a mixed breed dog is always healthier than a purebred dog. — Quickfall 2013

According to a large five-year-old study conducted by Thomas P. Bellumori et al., and published in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, after analyzing more than 90,000 health records, it was found that no difference was seen among purebred and cross-bred dogs when it came to the incidence of 13 heritable conditions. There were only a few exceptions where it was actually found that some hereditary conditions remain isolated to specific breeds. Still, other than that, the superior health benefits claimed by breeders seem to be a myth.

The Bottom Line

Hybrids are also not immune from health issues. Therefore, if you happen to hear a designer breeder asking a hefty price and making claims of no need for health testing because hybrid vigour will magically wipe all health problems off the face of the earth, **don’t walk away—run!**

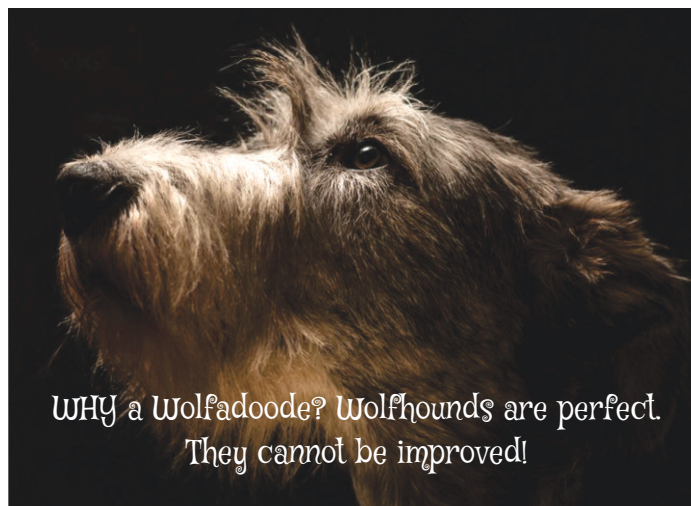
I do not think that any reputable Irish wolfhound breeder would sell one of their hounds for cross-breeding. Puppy millers and hybrid breeders would probably get their breeding stock from unethical IW breeders and disreputable backyard breeders. They have no Code of Ethics to frame their breeding practices, and they are the only judge of their reproduction quality.

If you fell in love with the Irish Wolfhound, then get the real McCoy from a responsible, reputable IW breeder. If you find it too big, do your research and get a purebred dog that will fit your needs and lifestyle from a reputable member-breeder of their National Breed Club.

References:

Institute of Canine Biology: The myth of hybrid vigor in dogs...is a myth

Healthy Pets: The Surprising Truth About Mixed Breed Dogs



WHY a Wolfadoodle? Wolfhounds are perfect.
They cannot be improved!