Addison's Disease:
Breeder Guidance and Considerations
Global Australian Labradoodle Association
GALA

Addison's disease is a complex, polygenic condition, meaning it is influenced by multiple genes rather than a single identifiable genetic cause. Research indicates that several genetic risk factors (loci) may contribute to disease development. A dog must carry a sufficient combination of these risk factors for Addison's disease to occur; however, not all known risk factors need to be present.

Genetic and environmental considerations

In addition to genetic susceptibility, Addison's disease is widely believed to require an environmental trigger to manifest. As a result, a dog may carry multiple genetic risk factors and never develop the disease.

Potential environmental contributors may include, but are not limited to:

- Multiple vaccinations administered at the same time
- Exposure to certain toxins
- Oral flea and tick medications
- Poor nutrition
- Other environmental or physiological stressors

Because Addison's disease is influenced by both genetic and environmental factors, the presence of an affected dog does not necessarily indicate a breeding program deficiency.

Breeding guidance

Given the polygenic and environmentally influenced nature of Addison's disease, canine geneticists and population-focused breeding experts generally do not recommend removing dogs from breeding programs solely because they have produced an affected offspring. Eliminating breeding dogs on this basis alone may unnecessarily reduce genetic diversity and could have unintended long-term consequences for breed health.

GALA supports thoughtful, risk-aware breeding decisions rather than automatic exclusion.

Recommended best practices include:

- Do not repeat the specific breeding combination that produced an affected dog.
- Do not breed either parent to dogs that have produced Addison's-affected offspring.
- Do not retain puppies from the affected litter for future breeding.
- As an added precaution, it may be acceptable to breed the male to unrelated females (for example, his sisters or daughters), while avoiding any relatives of the affected dam.

Breeders are encouraged to review available research, consult knowledgeable veterinary and genetic professionals, and make informed decisions that prioritize the long-term health, stability, and diversity of the breed.

Prevalence and context

Addison's disease is considered uncommon. While no breeding program can eliminate all health risks, responsible management focuses on informed decision-making, transparency, and education rather than assumptions of causation.

Breeders are encouraged to provide puppy families with information on reducing potential environmental risk factors associated with Addison's disease and other autoimmune conditions. However, some risk factors remain outside a breeder's control, and not all recommendations can be consistently followed in every home.

GALA perspective

Addison's disease has no single genetic test and no singular cause. GALA's health guidance emphasizes balanced stewardship, population health, and evidence-based decision-making. Responsible breeding management focuses on reducing risk while preserving valuable genetics, rather than excluding dogs based on limited or incomplete information.