

Chocolate Labs Die Younger Than Yellow or Black Counterparts

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November 2, 2018 - Chocolate Labrador retrievers have a shorter life expectancy than either yellow or black Labrador retrievers, a retrospective study has found.

Paul McGreevy, BVSc, PhD, professor at the Sydney School of Veterinary Science, and colleagues reported their findings in the October 2018 issue of *Canine Genetics and Epidemiology*.

Researchers identify that Labrador retrievers are reportedly predisposed to numerous health conditions. However, limited accurate data exists. The aim of this study was to explore the demography of the UK Labrador retriever population and the health conditions to which they are purportedly linked.

The clinical records of 33 320 Labrador retrievers under UK veterinary care in 2013 were analyzed for demographic data. From these dogs, a random sample of 2074 was selected for mortality and disorder data.

Chocolate Labrador retrievers ($n = 34$) were found to have a median longevity of 10.7 years, compared with 12.1 years in non-chocolate-colored Labrador retrievers ($n = 139$; $P = .028$). In addition, researchers found that chocolate Labrador retrievers were significantly more likely than black or yellow Labrador retrievers to suffer from pyotraumatic dermatitis (23.4% vs 12.8% and 17%, respectively; $P < .001$) and otitis externa (4.0% vs 1.1% and 1.6%, respectively; $P = .011$).

The authors acknowledge limitations in the relatively small sample sizes for some results in the study and the resulting possibility of type II errors.

“The significantly shorter lifespan of chocolate dogs compared with non-chocolate dogs may reflect differences in lifetime burden of disease, notably disorders of the integument, that may create differences in accumulated immune response.” the authors propose.

The association between color and lifespan has not, to date, been demonstrated in other breeds. Further investigations are required into differentially pigmented breeds to explore associations between color, lifespan, and disease.

This study was funded in part by the Kennel Club Charitable Trust and the University of Sydney Special Studies Leave Programme.

Reference: McGreevy PD, Wilson BJ, Mansfield CS, et al. Labrador retrievers under primary veterinary care in the UK: demography, mortality and disorders. *Canine Genetics and Epidemiology* 2018 5:8. doi: 10.1186/s40575-018-0064-x.