

Obama Family Closes In on First Dog

Top choices are a Labrador-Poodle mix and a Portuguese Water Dog.

Posted: January 12, 2009, 6:30 p.m. EST

What kind of dog, and when?

That question, directed at President-elect Barack Obama during Sunday's "This Week" program hosted by George Stephanopoulos, was slipped in by Obama's daughters. The response that Obama gave narrowed the choice to two.

"They seem to have narrowed it down to a Labradoodle or a Portuguese water hound," Obama said. "We're closing in on it."

The host pointed out that the choices fall in the medium size category. "Medium-sized dog," Obama replied. "And so, we're now going to start looking at shelters to see when one of those dogs might come up."

Lisa Peterson, American Kennel Club director of communications, said the decision to look at the Portuguese Water Dog was "a wonderful choice." Getting a purebred dog means you get the benefit of predictability, she said, and Porties are known as athletic, loyal companions, good family pets, resistant to fatigue, and easily trained.

In addition, they are as hypoallergenic as any dog can be with their coat type, she said. That's a plus for allergy sufferers, such as Obama's daughter Malia.

While the AKC considers the "Labradoodle" a mixed breed (Labrador Retriever-Poodle mix), more than 42,000 voters on the organization's website chose a Poodle as the ideal dog for the Obamas in a poll conducted in the summer of 2008. The Portuguese Water Dog was not among the choices listed in the poll.

There are several well-known Porties, including Splash and Sunny – Sen. Ted Kennedy's dogs. Splash serves as the fictional narrator in Kennedy's children's book called "My Senator and Me: A Dog's-Eye View of Washington, D.C."

Obama promised his daughters a dog when they got to the White House. Vice President-elect Joe Biden's wife also promised her husband a dog if he and Obama won the election. In December, Biden picked out a German Shepherd Dog from a Pennsylvania breeder.

Obama wouldn't budge when asked by Stephanopoulos to set a timetable for taking home the dog.

- Read more about the Obama family's search for a dog -