

Dog Clubs Weigh In on the Obama Dog Choices

Purebred clubs air concerns about the unpredictability of mixed-breed puppies.

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Before President Barack Obama and his family decide on what kind of puppy they'll name as the next "first dog," the Poodle Club of America and the Labrador Retriever Club have spoken out against one of the two finalists — a cross between the two breeds, known as a "Labradoodle."

The unpredictability of this hybrid dog concerns longtime breed experts like Peggy McDill of the Poodle Club of America, who said the first family would be better off electing a purebred dog. Also being eyed by Obama's daughters, Malia and Sasha, is the Portuguese Water Dog. The reason for narrowing the field to these choices had much to do with a desire to reduce Malia's allergies.

However, McDill said, the "Labradoodle" hasn't been successful as a low-shedding dog, mainly because Labradors are "terrible shedders." The goal of a Lab-Poodle mix, first produced in Australia in 1989 through an experimental breeding program sponsored by the Royal Guide Dog Association, was to create a dog with the best of both breeds, including the Lab's temperament and the Poodle's low-shedding coat, to serve people with allergies. "It didn't work," McDill said.

On top of that, Poodles are too social to serve as guide dogs, she said. And although she would love to see a Poodle in the White House — as would a majority of the 42,000 people who voted in an American Kennel Club presidential puppy poll — McDill said a "Portie" would make a fine choice.

Fred Kampo, vice president of the LRC, said it's important for both clubs to make the Obamas and dog lovers everywhere aware of the differences between a purebred and a mixed-breed dog. For example, there is no predictability in size, temperament, energy level, or coat type when it comes to mixed breeds.

Portuguese Water Dogs are known for their high energy, friendliness, and low-shedding coats, as well as for being Sen. Edward Kennedy's breed of choice. "We want to educate people on the misconceptions of the designer dog and encourage the Obamas to get a PWD," McDill added.

- Read more about the search for the Obama dog -