

# Labradoodle Creator Now Regrets Cross-Breeding

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(DOGS) The Labradoodle, a mix between a labrador and a standard poodle, was originally bred for a woman who needed a non-allergenic guide dog.

Now, the man responsible for the breed's creation says he regrets creating a new breed – and all of the problems that came along with it. – Global Animal

*Sydney Morning Herald*

If Wally Conron had known what was going to become of the labradoodle, he wouldn't have bred the dog in the first place. It was 22 years ago and Conron, now 81, was working as the breeding manager for the Royal Guide Dog Association of Australia when his boss set him a tough task. A blind woman from Hawaii had written asking if they could provide a guide dog that would not shed hair, because her husband was allergic to it. "I said, 'Oh yes, this will be a piece of cake. The standard poodle is a working dog, it doesn't shed hair, it'll be great.' I tried 33 in the course of three years and they all failed. They just didn't make a guide dog."

Conron decided there was one possibility left: take his best labrador bitch and mate it with a standard poodle. They created three cross-breed puppies that needed to be boarded out to be trained and socialised but nobody would take them; everyone wanted a pure-bred. And that's when Conron came up with the name labradoodle. "I went to our PR team and said, 'Go to the press and tell them we've invented a new dog, the labradoodle.' It was a gimmick and it went worldwide. No one wanted a cross-breed but the following day we had hundreds of calls from people wanting these master dogs."

The labradoodle proved to be a brilliant dog for the blind and the woman in Hawaii was happy. So what was the problem?

It's how the dog has been used and abused and sold under false pretences, Conron says. "When the pups were five months old, we sent clippings and saliva to Hawaii to be tested with this woman's husband. Of the three pups, he was not allergic to one of them. In the next litter I had, there were 10 pups but only three had non-allergenic coats. Now, people are breeding these dogs and selling them as non-allergenic and they're not even testing them.

"All these backyard breeders have jumped on the bandwagon and they're crossing any kind of dog with a poodle. They're selling them for more than a pure-bred is worth and they're not going into the backgrounds of the parents of the dogs. There are so many poodle crosses having fits, problems with their eyes, hips and elbows; a lot have epilepsy. There are a few ethical breeders but very, very few."

Conron says that despite the fact the dogs have helped so many blind people, he regrets creating the first cross-breed. "I released a Frankenstein. ... People say 'aren't you proud of yourself?' and I say, 'not in the slightest. I've done so much harm to pure breeding.'"