



April 29, 2021

Gary & Colette Dickmeyer
Wolf Den Retrievers
5160 Lower Peterson Rd
Duluth, MN 55804

RE: Dewclaw Removal Recommendations

Gary & Colette,

We have talked a great deal about dewclaw removal and whether or not it is recommended for you to have this done in your newborn puppies. As I am sure you are aware, there are different schools of thought in regard to the benefits and risks of this procedure.

The AKC supports dewclaw removal. Their official position statement is that "A dewclaw is essentially an extra claw on dogs that serves no function. These can get snagged or torn causing great pain. Removing the dewclaw shortly after birth protects the dog from a more serious injury later."

Contrary to the AKC position that the dewclaw serves no function, allow me to share this nice summary by Dr. Jennifer Coates: "A dewclaw that is attached by bone to a dog's front foot has a definite purpose. When dogs run, their front feet often bend to the point where their dewclaws come in contact with the ground. At high speeds (especially when turning) or on slippery surfaces, these dewclaws provide extra traction and help stabilize the carpal (wrist) joint. Some dogs also use their dewclaws to help them climb trees, hold objects to better chew on them, or climb out of the water if they've broken through ice. The usefulness of dewclaws that are only attached by skin is less clear".

I did a pretty thorough web search of Labrador breeders and it seems there is a pretty even split on those who recommend dewclaw removal and those who do not. I for one, do not feel it is necessary. Over my 30 years of practice, I have seen far more injured "regular" toes/toenails than I have dewclaws. While there is always a risk of dewclaw injury, I do not feel the risk is greater than for any other toe.

There will always be people passionately arguing on both sides of this issue and I'm sure you will have clients who want them removed and clients who don't. My recommendation for Wolf Den is to not have the dewclaws removed as newborns. Let your clients decide what they want to do. If you make the choice to remove the dewclaws, you are making the choice for them and given how controversial this procedure is, I don't think it is fair to force every future puppy owner to have to choose removal. For any that want them removed, it is easy enough to have them removed at the time of the spay or neuter, so you are not causing any undo harm by waiting.

I hope that helps!

Respectfully,

Dr. Michael Hargrove