With such a bleak outlook, most breeders who had once envisioned these dogs adding to the Dal gene pool gave up. But in 2005 the project was renewed, and the few remaining LUA Dals were incorporated into more lines, even though they still couldn't be registered. They did, in fact, look somewhat different compared to pure Dals. Their spots were often smaller, or more mottled or irregular, even though their body type was definitely all Dal.

By the 2000s the pendulum had swung in the other direction, with more breeders emphasizing health over purity and–by a narrow margin–a 2006 DCA membership chose to accept the LUA Dalmatians. Still, they had to petition the AKC. In 2009 LUA breeders made a formal request to the AKC to register the dogs. With backing from veterinarians and geneticists, and with a final but close vote in the affirmative by DCA members, the LUA Dalmatians were finally admitted into the AKC studbook, with the proviso that their registration numbers start with the letters NY. Many LUA Dalmatians have since made their mark in the show ring. Even though they have their detractors, and despite the fact that their dots–while close–are not quite as perfect as the non-LUA Dal dots. Why there is a dotting difference remains a mystery, unless the perfect dots themselves are caused by the same gene that causes high uric acid (termed a pleiotropic effect), or so tightly linked it's hard to get the genes coding for the two traits to be inherited independently. But for a breed known for and even judged on its perfect spots, lack of perfection still bothers a lot of breeders. And some breeders dislike the LUA dogs simply because they can't see past the Pointer–despite the fact there's very little Pointer to see.

OODLES OF DOODLES

In 1989, Wally Conron, who worked at the Royal Guide Dogs Association of Australia, was asked to find a hypoallergenic dog for a blind man. But after trying out more than 30 Poodles, all guide dog failures, in desperation he crossed a Poodle with a Labrador. One of the three puppies worked out, but the remaining two mixes were homeless. So, the organization's PR department put out a blurb touting their fantastic attributes, and the demand for these wonder doodles was born. Conron says he knew it was a disaster in the making just days after the advertisement, but it was too late.

"I opened a Pandora box and released a Frankenstein monster," he's since famously said. "I've done so much harm to pure breeding and made many charlatans quite rich."

AKC refuses to recognize any of the doodle crosses–for several reasons. Foremost amongst them is that most, like the more traditional Pekapoo and Cockapoo, are the result of F1 (first generation) crosses, and that's not a breed. Very few have continued generation after generation in an effort to create a reliable type that breeds true. The exception is probably the Australian Labradoodle, which is claimed to be a breed in progress that has incorporated not only the original two breeds but crosses to several others. Still, don't hold your breath for their recognition.

AKC tends to frown on any new breed without a venerable past and ancient history, although recent exceptions are the Biewer Terrier, American Hairless Terrier, and American Miniature Shepherd. These were all created not by crosses, but by the birth of odd puppies or by continued selection within their parent breeds of Yorkshire Terrier and Rat Terrier–and are purportedly purebred.

Back in the 1980s Whippet (and Sheltie) breeder Walter Wheeler somewhat infamously promoted his line of longhaired Whippets, which he alleged arose from a recessive gene hidden in the breed for generations. Whippet people, and especially the American Whippet Club, were dubious. They changed the standard to disallow longhaired dogs and fought to make sure the AKC never recognized them even as a new breed.

Only years later, with the advent of DNA, was it found that these dogs shared a lot of Sheltie genes that purebred Whippets did not. Subsequent breeders embraced the little sighthound's "lurcher" heritage, and even admitted to later adding some Borzoi crosses. A name change to Silken Windhound removed any claim of it being a type of Whippet, but the damage was done. To this day, many Whippet breeders decry any mention of AKC recognition, and despite almost 50 years of breeding, plus a devoted breed base, the Silken Windhound is not even an FSS breed.

Yet other breeds have almost just as surely introduced colors and patterns and coat types by clandestine crosses. The merle explosion in breeds in almost every group is the most widespread example. With the exception of the Dachshund and Great Dane, merle is historically a Herding group trait, with it being more controversial in some Toy breeds, and downright unnatural in many others now being promoted as rare. But because DNA testing is really only reliable enough to establish parentage, the AKC cannot cancel registrations based on any existing breed purity tests without risking lawsuits. The best they can do is encourage parent clubs to change their standards to disqualify merle Poodles, silver Labs, and longhaired Frenchies–but they can still be registered.

THE SIBERIAN QUESTION

The common use of DNA for health testing has accidentally led to some questions about breed purity. This was the case with Siberian Huskies. Owners who were having DNA tests run on their purebred Sibes were getting a surprise: Many were not purebred Sibes, according to the DNA. Note that while everyone knows that Alaskan Huskies, which are bred for racing performance rather than pedigree purity, are long known to have other breeds–notably Saluki and Pointer–mixed in. But Siberian Huskies are expected to race depending on just their Siberian Husky ancestry.

That was not the case, as it turned out. A recent Cornell study of more than 300 Sibes found that some Siberian Huskies have a smattering of non-Siberian Husky DNA. Non-Sibe DNA included DNA from Alaskan Malamutes as well as European breeds. It was found mostly in racing lines, but still, some was in pet and even show lines.

This was enough to cause some Sibe breeders to call for widespread DNA tests to ensure the dogs competing in the ring or being bred were pure Siberians. But other breeders question this action. How would this be practical? Would dogs having a certain percentage of non-Sibe DNA be banned from competition? AKC would almost certainly never ban them from anything. How much non-Sibe DNA would be too much? And how reliable is DNA testing that it would always come up with the same percentage? At what point would they be throwing out great dogs and narrowing their gene pool? There's really nothing that can be done at this point. I suppose the parent club could demand certain limits for club-sponsored awards, but again, that's opening a Pandora's box and possibly inviting lawsuits. If breeders are concerned, they can elect to do their own DNA testing, or demand it from stud dogs, but that's their personal business.