

NORTHWEST LAGOTTO

How to Verify Health Testing

Verified is not a synonym for claimed.

A buyer's framework for evaluating any breeder's health testing claims — including ours, including the breeder down the road, including the one with the impressive website.

PREPARED BY
Northwest Lagotto
Lynden, Washington

EDITION
Spring 2026
nwlagotto.com

FOREWORD

Verified, not claimed

Why the questions you ask determine the answers you get.

This is the document we wish every Lagotto buyer received before they started talking to breeders. The questions you ask determine the answers you get, and the questions most buyers know to ask are the wrong ones. “Is the puppy health-tested?” will get a yes from almost every breeder selling a puppy. The follow-up questions — what was tested, who did the testing, where the results are recorded, how the results read — are the ones that matter, and the ones a casual buyer almost never asks.

WHAT THIS GUIDE IS, AND IS NOT

This is a framework for verifying any breeder’s health testing claims, applicable to ours, to a competitor’s, or to a breeder we have never heard of. It is intentionally general — the breed-specific test panel changes over time as research improves, and the registry databases evolve, but the logic of verification does not. Apply this framework to any litter you are seriously considering, including from us.

It is not a guide to genetic disease in the Lagotto Romagnolo, nor a veterinary reference. It will not tell you whether a particular result is favourable; the OFA database will. It will tell you how to find the result, read it, and confirm it is genuine.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The single most expensive mistake a Lagotto buyer can make is taking a breeder’s health-testing claim at face value. Two of the major hereditary concerns in the breed — Lagotto Storage Disease and Benign Familial Juvenile Epilepsy — are catastrophic when they appear, and entirely preventable by responsible parent testing. A puppy from untested parents is a gamble; a puppy from “tested” parents whose results were never published or verified is a different gamble dressed in better marketing.

Five minutes of database verification before you place a deposit is the highest-leverage time you will spend in the entire purchase process. The next page tells you exactly what to do.

THE PANEL

What gets tested

Six tests that should be on every Lagotto breeder's panel.

The current breed-relevant test panel for the Lagotto Romagnolo is below. These are the tests a responsible breeder runs on every dog they breed from. The standard evolves as research improves; verify the current recommendations with the Lagotto Romagnolo Club of America (LRCA) or the Italian breed club (CILR) before any specific litter.

LSD — Lagotto Storage Disease*DNA test*

A neurodegenerative disease specific to the breed. The test is unambiguous: a dog is Clear, Carrier, or Affected. Two carriers should never be bred together. A Clear-to-Carrier breeding produces no Affected puppies. Both parents should have a published result.

BFJE — Benign Familial Juvenile Epilepsy*DNA test*

Seizures appearing between five and nine weeks of age, typically self-resolving but distressing and indicative of the genetic mutation. Same testing logic as LSD: Clear, Carrier, Affected. Both parents should have a published result.

Hip evaluation*OFA or PennHIP*

Assesses hip joint conformation. OFA grades range from Excellent through Severe Dysplasia. Both parents should have a result of Fair or better, ideally Good or Excellent. Look for the OFA hip number on the result; PennHIP equivalent is the Distraction Index score.

Elbow evaluation*OFA*

Screens for elbow dysplasia. Result is Normal or one of three grades of dysplasia. Both parents should be Normal.

Eye evaluation (CAER)*ACVO veterinary ophthalmologist*

Annual ophthalmic exam by a board-certified veterinary ophthalmologist. Detects progressive eye conditions. The result is current only for twelve months from the exam date — verify the exam date on the most recent CAER, not just whether one was ever performed.

Patellar luxation*OFA*

Evaluates kneecap stability. Result is Normal or grades 1–4. Both parents should be Normal.

THE PROTOCOL

How to verify any breeder

A four-step protocol that takes about five minutes per breeder.

The Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) maintains a public database of health-test results at ofa.org. Results published on OFA are the gold standard for verification because they are independently administered and cannot be edited by the breeder. The four-step protocol below works for any breeder you are considering.

1. Get the registered names of both parents

Not the call names — the registered names as they appear on AKC, ICAA, ENCI, or another formal registry. “Bella” will not work in a database; “Northwood’s Bella di Lago” will. A breeder who cannot or will not give you the registered names of both parents is the answer to your verification question already.

2. Search both names on ofa.org

Open ofa.org, click Search, enter the registered name. The result page lists every health test on file for that dog, with the date performed, the result, and the OFA certification number. If the dog has no entries, OFA has no record of the testing — regardless of what the breeder has claimed.

3. Verify each test is current and the result is favourable

OFA hip, elbow, patellar, and DNA results are lifetime; they do not expire. CAER eye exams expire annually — verify the exam date. For DNA tests (LSD, BFJE), the result should be Clear or Carrier, never Affected. For orthopaedic tests, look for the threshold described on the previous page.

4. Cross-check with the breed registry

AKC and ICAA both maintain pedigree databases that include some health-test results. ENCI (the Italian registry) similarly. Cross-checking is not strictly necessary if OFA confirms the testing, but it is a useful sanity check — and confirms the dog is registered, with a verifiable pedigree, in the first place.

If a breeder’s claimed testing does not appear on OFA, ask why directly. There are a few legitimate explanations — a recently-tested dog whose results have not yet been entered, an international dog whose results live on a foreign registry. There are far more illegitimate explanations. “OFA is not the only registry” is technically true and operationally a red flag — every responsible North American breeder publishes on OFA because there is no good reason not to.

RED FLAGS

What language tells you

Seven claims that warrant follow-up before you proceed.

The language a breeder uses to describe testing is itself diagnostic. The claims below are common, and each tells you something specific. Some are outright dishonest; others are honest-sounding but technically meaningless. All of them warrant follow-up before you proceed.

“Vet-checked”	Means a veterinarian examined the puppy. Says nothing about whether the parents were genetically tested. Every reputable breeder vet-checks every puppy; this is the floor, not a feature. If “vet-checked” is the only testing language, the parents have not been tested.
“Health-tested” (with no specifics)	An unfalsifiable claim. Ask which tests, on which dogs, where the results are published. A confident answer — LSD, BFJE, OFA hips and elbows, both parents, on OFA at this number — is a healthy sign. Hesitation is also a sign.
“All our dogs are healthy”	Unverifiable. Every breeder’s dogs are healthy until they are not. Ask for the specific test results.
“We don’t need to test, we know our lines”	Genetic disease cannot be reliably detected by inspection. LSD and BFJE are recessive — affected puppies appear in apparently healthy lines. This claim is a substantive failure to understand basic genetics.
“We test, but we don’t share the results”	Health-test results have no privacy implication; they are routinely published. A refusal to share is, with rare exception, a refusal to disclose. The exceptions are unusual; the pattern is not.
“Our testing is on a different registry”	Sometimes true. Verify which registry, look it up, confirm the result. International dogs often have results on FCI-aligned registries that OFA does not display; this is legitimate. “A different registry” that you cannot find when you search for it is not legitimate.
Pedigree-only testing claims	“All our dogs have champion pedigrees” is a marketing claim, not a health claim. Show titles correlate weakly with genetic health. A dog from a champion lineage with no published health testing is no safer than any other untested dog.

If a breeder’s answers do not satisfy this framework, the right next step is not negotiation; it is moving on. There are good Lagotto breeders in North America — most of them publish on OFA, answer questions directly, and take five minutes to walk a buyer through their dogs’ results. Apply this framework to us and to anyone else. We will pass it; we expect any breeder you would consider to do the same.