



Identifying a Quality Breeder

(Yes, they DO exist, but you must do YOUR homework!)



Raising sound, healthy, well-socialized puppies is difficult work with very specific demands. Quality breeders care about the animals they produce; most say that if someone is making money breeding puppies, he/she is doing something wrong!

However, the responsibility of finding and buying a great pet depends on **YOU**. Please research breed standards to learn all the important points about color, size, and traits of each breed you are interested in. Then, research further to learn more about the personality quirks, exercise requirements, and other unique qualities of the breed(s). Once you identify a breed that fits your lifestyle, we'd prefer that you locate a rescue specializing in that breed and adopt, but we also realize that this option is not for everyone.

The following list contains guidelines to help an informed buyer find a caring, quality breeder. If a breeder does not meet the following "Twelve Points to Identifying a Quality Breeder"...**WALK AWAY...DO NOT BUY!**

1. **A quality breeder will provide a list of specific health checks done on adult dogs before they are bred and/or on the puppies before selling them.**

Examples might be CERF (eye), OFA (hips, heart), thyroid tests, von Willebrands Disease (blood clotting) and BAER (hearing) as appropriate to the breed. You must know which problems are likely to occur in your breed and what checks should be done. That is why researching the breed(s) that interest you is SO important.

WARNING: If the breeder or ads simply say "Vet checked"...**BEWARE**. This statement is too general.

2. **A quality breeder will provide a lifetime "take back" guarantee and will require that you return the dog or get approval for a new home if you cannot keep him.**

Good breeders do everything in their power to find their puppies good, permanent homes, and keep them there. A quality breeder will require that if you must ever give up the dog, he / she **MUST** go back to the breeder or to a new home the breeder has screened.

WARNING: Don't just take the breeder's word on this...get a "take back" clause in writing.

3. **A quality breeder will require a written application from you and provide you with list of references so that you can check him/her out, also.**

Good breeders put a tremendous amount of work into their dogs. They care deeply about their animals, are justifiably proud of them, and will not sell them to "just anyone." They know from experience what kind of homes are likely to be the very best for the dogs they have produced. Good

breeders will require a written application and will screen YOU to make sure you have the proper home, lifestyle and finances to properly care for your new puppy. At the same time, they will welcome your questions.

WARNING: A breeder who will sell a dog to you without getting an application from you does not care about you or the animals.

4. **A quality breeder makes sure you know the breed's temperament, needs, and special characteristics.**

If the breed you're considering drools a lot, is hard to housebreak, has a high "prey drive" or isn't good around small children, for example, a good breeder makes sure you understand those traits. If your dog must be kept as an indoor dog, must always be leashed or fenced, requires lots of grooming, a responsible breeder tells you these things upfront.

Many kinds of breed "faults" are okay for a pet. To a quality breeder, a "fault" is a trait that is not exactly to breed standard. For example, the breeder might say "This puppy is going to be oversized, so we won't be able to show him," or "Look at the way he carries his tail – that's a fault." This is the sign of an honest breeder who wants you to know the specifics of breed and the puppies he/she is selling.

WARNING: If a breeder starts to sound like a used-car salesman, telling you only the good things about the dogs and refusing to talk about the bad ones, or is misrepresenting "faults" as rare or desirable characteristics, find another breeder.

5. **A quality breeder will provide a written contract with specific requirements and guarantees for both the seller/breeder and the buyer.** Your signature on a well written contract with a health guarantees, a spay/neuter requirement for "pet quality puppies," and specific recommendations for care and training is always required by quality breeders when you buy a puppy.

WARNING: If the breeder guarantees health for a short period of time like a few days or weeks then you are NOT dealing with a quality breeder. Also, steer clear of breeders who want you to let your pet be used as "breeding stock" at a later date.

6. **A quality breeder will provide a written health record for your puppy.** This should include the date of whelping, any health problems, the date and kind of each shot, and the dates of worming and drug that was used. Your vet will want this information; having it in writing makes it much more likely that your puppy has gotten the care he needs.

WARNING: If the breeder just writes some information on a scrap of paper off the top of his/her head, the record is NOT accurate and may not even be real.

7. **A quality breeder carefully plans and "pre-sells" each litter.** You must be patient and wait for your puppy. Quality breeders usually breed only when they have enough qualified buyers for the number of puppies likely to be produced from a breeding. You will be put on a waiting list if the breeder feels you are qualified to purchase one of the pups.

WARNING: If you rush out and get a puppy, any puppy, you will most likely end up with a puppy mill or back yard bred dog.

8. **A quality breeder will invite you to his/her home or place of business.** You will be able to meet the parents of the puppy and observe the conditions in which the animals are kept. The atmosphere should be clean, warm, healthy and friendly.

WARNING: Never meet a breeder in a parking lot to "make the deal." Quality breeders DO NOT operate this way.

9. **A quality breeder specializes and will only offer one (or possibly two) breeds of dogs.** It takes a lot to get to know a breed and the dogs' heritage, needs, requirements, temperament and health. Quality breeders take this work very seriously. It is very difficult for one person to be a "specialist"



in many breeds.

WARNING: Puppy millers and back yard breeders will breed any animals they think will "sell." They frequently sell more than one breed and may even be dealing in more than one species (cats and dogs, for example).

10. **A quality breeder will socialize the puppies.** The pups will be accustomed to people and a home environment.

WARNING: Be very wary of puppies that are kept in isolated environments away from people and normal experiences they would have once they "go home" with you. Isolated puppies will probably not be socialized.

11. **A quality breeder will NEVER allow you to take a puppy before it is AT LEAST 8 weeks old.** The puppy's age should be verified on well-kept records provided by the breeder. A good breeder knows that a puppy learns many of its "life skills" from his/her mom and littermates in the very early stages of life. The difference between a well adjusted social puppy and a fearful biter can be determined by a few additional weeks spent in the security of the litter.

WARNING: Back Yard Breeders and Puppy Millers see their animals as a "cash crop." They will want to get the money in their hands as soon as possible and will sell dogs way before they should be leaving their litter. Studies have shown that dogs taken from their litter too early are more susceptible to behavior and health problems.

12. **A quality breeder will be accessible.** He or she will give you his/her phone contacts. Quality breeders will invite you to call them if you have any questions or problems with your puppy. They will return your calls when you leave a message. You will know where they live and will have visited the place where the adults and puppies live.

WARNING: If the breeder is difficult to find or is elusive about his/her operation, location or contact information DO NOT buy from him/her. You need to have a breeder who will be available should you have questions or problems. Hint: visit <http://www.anywho.com/> on the internet, and click on the Reverse Lookup tab. Type in the breeder's phone number. If it comes up as unlisted or not available BEWARE. This may be a breeder who is trying to "hide." This is not a good sign of a quality breeder. Quality breeders have nothing to hide.