



Breeders

Nothing draws as much controversy among animal rights and animal rescue people as the discussion of breeders. I believe that anyone who loves animals is worth including in a group that benefits animals – such as animal rescue. If we ostracize breeders we are fighting a battle alone that could use the help of anyone willing to lend a hand.

People who are looking to bring a dog into their home should be educated on the resources available to them, and whenever possible, I suggest that people consider adoption first. However, so many in rescue contend that rescue is the *ONLY* option. By cutting off the conversation at this point, we see people ending up buying dogs from puppy-mills, pet stores and backyard breeders.

There are bad breeders and if this post does anything it should flush out the bad ones and give you the information to make an informed decision when getting your new best friend. As I said previously, I hope you'll consider adopting first. If you decide to get a dog from a breeder, it might be worth considering a second dog from a rescue as a best friend for your new best friend.

For years breeders have been vilified by the animal rights and rescue communities and not much has ever been said that makes logical sense. Why are some breeders bad and why can't we address what makes a good breeder? Never being the one to shy away from controversy, I'll address some important points here.

It seems that the main issue(s) poised against breeders by the animal rights community is the fact that they are making money by breeding dogs while others are dying (actually they are being killed) in the shelters. Although this may seem true on the surface, this argument holds no logic because there are countless other professions deriving a living from animals (whether they are bred or rescued). These people include vets, pet stores, groomers, trainers, behaviorists, retail pet products, day care facilities and many more. The fact that

dogs are being killed in the shelters is not the fault of the breeders, but rather the fault of the idiots who dump their dogs there. To say eliminating breeders would eliminate the shelter crisis is as ridiculous as saying that we can end dog bites through breed specific legislation. This statement should ring loud in the minds of animal rights activists.

It has been said, "statistics show that 30% of the dogs in the shelter are purebreds." If this is true, then we can thereby assume that 70% are mixed breeds and since no breeder is (in theory) breeding *mixed breed dogs*, most of the problem lies in irresponsible pet ownership (including improper containment, poor spay neuter policies as well as giving up on pets). To extrapolate a little further, we can also assume that a portion of this stated 30% (of purebreds in shelters) is as the result of backyard breeders and puppy mills. So, the smallest amount of the dogs in the shelter can now be linked to responsible breeders. Those that say, people will get a mixed breed dogs if we eliminate breeders are preaching a communistic approach. It's as ridiculous as saying if we legalize drugs no one will get drugs. Instead I think by keeping things legal and educating people (on breeders that is) we can flush out the backyard breeders and puppy mills and begin the relationship that can lend a hand in solving the problems that shelter pets need.

For those people that want a dog from a breeder there should be some information available from someone qualified to give it. It's also important to point out first and foremost that puppies are a lot of work. For those that think puppies are cute and a good pet for children, think again. Puppies require a lot of work and you should think twice before jumping in. There are six months in which you'll be replacing shoes, socks, wires, carpets, remotes, furniture, wallboards and a host of other things.

Breeders fall into 2 categories, as do most groups: the **good** and the **bad**. There are good vets and bad vets, good trainers and bad trainers, good groomers and bad groomers and the list goes on. So, to define what I feel makes a responsible breeder, I have made the following list. Before someone gets a dog from a breeder I do suggest visiting your local shelter and contact breed specific rescue organizations. If you're looking for a specific breed of dog there are breed specific rescues for EVERY breed of dog there is. Type the breed and rescue into Google and see what comes up. For example "German shepherd rescue Los Angeles" came up with countless pages of results. Keep in mind that specific breeds of dogs have specific character traits that may or may not work for specific owners. Rescues are also a good resource to ask for breeder referrals. One of my main criteria in considering a breeder reputable is if they work with rescue organizations, particularly those of the breed that they are breeding.

Here are some questions to arm yourself when speaking with breeders.

Is the breeder willing to truthfully answer the following questions?

I find this question to be crucial. If a breeder is not willing to answer questions, they are not a reputable breeder. They should be willing to spend time on the phone or better yet, in person with you to discuss your concerns.

Can you visit the breeder and meet the sire and dam?

Is the facility clean? What is the personality (temperament) of the other dogs in the breeder's home? Are they caged or living free. Breeders that keep their dogs in cages are probably not producing puppies that you would want to bring home.

Does the breeder spend regular time with their dogs? Do they partake in activities together?

Does the breeder have a relationship with their dogs? Can you see a bond between them? Oftentimes breeders will enter their dogs in activities such as sports, competitions and shows. These are more often the breeders that have a passion for dogs and the betterment of their breed.

Will the breeder provide references of people they've sold pups to?

Call and ask people their experiences with the dog they got from the breeder including health, temperament, as well as the breeder's willingness to offer support after the sale. It is best if you can get a few people that have had their dogs for various lengths of time. For example a person that just got their dog is not as solid a referral as someone who's had their dog for several years. This will give you an indication of the dogs overall health, temperament and the relationship with the breeder.

How often is each bitch bred and at what age is her first and last breeding?

Good breeders allow a dog to mature before breeding them and retire a dog after several years of breeding. Bad breeders allow very young dogs to give birth and breed them till the day they die.

Does the breeder have litters readily available?

Although this is not a red flag, it is important to determine if a breeder continues to breed when they have not placed dogs from a previous litter. Top breeders generally have a waiting list of people looking to get a puppy from them and the wait can often be up to a year. No impulse purchases for puppies!

Can the breeder give you detailed information on the specific breeds temperament, health issues, and genetic defects? The pros and cons of owning this breed...

As I mentioned before, specific breeds have characteristics that can make them the best pets for some people and the worst nightmare for others. Knowing what you're getting into beforehand is crucial if you plan on keeping the dog for it's entire life.

Is there an application to get a puppy from the breeder? How thorough is it? The breeder should care where the puppy goes and should ask thorough questions of the potential new home. If you feel the application is too long, you probably shouldn't get a dog. Good breeders want to know that their dog is in good hands. The more thorough the application – the better the breeder.

Will the breeder take the dog back?

If the sale is final after you leave- RUN. Responsible breeders are concerned about their dogs (for life) and have stipulations in their agreements that if you can't keep the dog it must be returned to them. Often times breeders have dogs living with them from people that couldn't keep them for various reasons and are willing to place these dogs. This might be a good option if a puppy isn't for you.

Does the breeder sell over the Internet?

There's a big difference between a breeder advertising over the Internet and one that sells over the Internet. I don't agree with breeders who make the sale over the Internet and ship the dog clear cross country with no references, application or interview. This is a sign of a poor breeder and one that should be avoided. Having a website that showcases their dogs is a good thing for me. It gives me the ability to educate myself on the breeder, their dogs, their philosophy and more. Of course you must understand that people can lie on a website, so be sure to check up on anything you question.

Does the breeder temperament test the dogs?

Every dog bites and puppies from one litter can differ in temperament. There are various things that are looked for in a temp test including the dogs drive, reaction to stress, their personality with other dogs, how the puppies are with children, their genetic strengths and weaknesses, and much more. Temperament testing is not a 100% assurance, but it gives you a snapshot into the overall dog.

Are the puppies socialized?

Much of the socialization process of a puppy takes place long before you get your dog at 8 weeks or older. If the dog receives no socialization or exposure to outside stimuli the dog may have behavioral issues that can be difficult to fix. One of the main things that I look for is if the dogs are socialized around children, sounds, and outside stimuli. Dogs that have issues with small children oftentimes had negative or no exposure during early imprint stages. Good breeders spend much effort to get their puppies around positive imprints including handling, children, other dogs, noises, textures and more.

Are the parents tested for genetic defects, eyes, heart, hips, etc.?

Puppy mills do not test parents for genetic defects and therefore pass these defects on to their offspring. Even though I believe these dogs deserve a happy life and should not be culled, they should never be bred.

Does the breeder work with rescue organizations?

This is one of the most important questions to me. I feel that a breeder that has a relationship with rescue organizations is in-tuned to the shelter crisis and is doing their part to help.

Is the puppy microchipped before it gets to you?

If a breeder provides you with a puppy that is microchipped, they are responsible about where the dog ends up. Micro-chipping is a great way to be sure that if a dog turns up somewhere, it can be reunited with its owner.

There will be those that will criticize all breeders and say that no dogs should be bred until the shelters are empty. This idealistic, dogmatic, authoritarian, Nazi-like approach will never work so we might as well address what we can do to work together. For those that criticize me for taking a stand to differentiate between responsible breeders and the backyard breeders and puppy-mills, remember that my work has saved countless dogs. My training and temperament testing has given many dogs a chance that would never have a chance and my work with rescue organizations has given them the tools to help animals that have been put away for dead.

I love dogs and have dedicated my life to making the world a better place for these dogs. Whether the dog comes from a shelter, a rescue or a responsible breeder makes little difference to me. What does matter to me is if this dog will have a happy, healthy and stable home for its *entire* life. As I stated many times, the answer to the problem isn't in saving the dogs out of the shelter today, the answer lies in preventing any dog from ever ending up in a shelter.

Dog training has inherent risks. I urge you to research and consult a professional for training advice.

Please visit my animal rescue organization and consider supporting our important work:

<http://www.boundangels.org>

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