

## How to Recognize a Reputable Breeder

So, you've decided the pet for you is a purebred dog ... good for you! Maybe. The question is, how do you find a reputable breeder? There are so many ads in the newspaper and so much conflicting information, and most of the books you read only mention the positive characteristics of the various breeds. (Common sense tells you every breed can't be as perfect as it is described!) How do you find someone who will be honest with you about their breed so you can make a truly informed choice?

The following are some of the typical characteristics of a reputable breeder:

1. Reputable breeders only produce a litter with the goal of improving their breed and with the full intent of keeping a puppy from the litter with which to continue their efforts. They do not breed to make money, to supply the pet market during a wave of breed popularity, to give the kids a sex education, or simply because they happen to have two dogs of the same breed on the premises. These last are all spurious reasons to add more dogs to the current population. If the breeder has produced a litter for a silly reason....beware!
2. Reputable breeders nearly always belong to a local or national breed club and are active in showing or trialing their dogs. These competitions include licensed dog shows, field trials, obedience trials, herding trials, tracking events, terrier trials and sled dog racing (amongst others). Competition helps to gauge whether a given dog is worthy of being bred; whether it offers the breed virtues that are worth reproducing. A good breeder knows that registration papers only mean the dog is purebred; they do not in any way confer or imply quality or breeding value. If the breeder does not belong to any dog organizations or compete with their dogs....beware!
3. Reputable breeders are willing and eager to spend time with you, explaining teaching and advising you about their breed. They will make the disadvantages of owning their breed crystal clear, and it may be the first topic of conversation! No breed is perfect for everyone, and the responsible breeder wants to be absolutely sure that you really want, and are prepared to care for this kind of dog. If the breeder does not go into breed peculiarities....beware!
4. Reputable breeders will screen you carefully, to assure your suitability for owning their breed. They will not sell a large, active dog to an apartment dweller or to someone without a fence, for example, nor a tiny toy dog to a home with small children. They will refuse a sale, regardless of any personal financial strain or the amount of work involved, rather than place any dog in an unsuitable situation. If the breeder does not question you closely about your home situation.... beware!
5. Reputable breeders sell only healthy stock, fully vetted, and guaranteed for some reasonable length of time after the sale. Their dogs are tested for any genetic deficiencies can be detected by the age at which the dog is sold. Most offer, or even require, that the dog be returned to them if your situation changes so that you cannot keep the dog. This applies whether the dog is 10 weeks old or 10 years old. No responsible breeder wants their dogs to end life in the pound or on the streets. If "all sales are final", breed-appropriate testing hasn't been done (or the breeder says "Oh that's not a problem in this breed" when you know it is), or their dogs appear unwell....beware!

6. Reputable breeders are involved, on some level, in breed "rescue" work. They are loathe to see their breed in trouble, whether that be an unsuitable home or a pound or shelter. When notified, they spend their own time and money to collect the dog, have it vetted, trained and socialized if necessary, and find it a loving home. While a breeder might not specifically mention involvement in rescue work if he or she cranks out multiple litters a year and/or acts as a broker, chances are they are more concerned with making money than with the unwanted pet problem..... beware!

7. Reputable breeders ask you to stay in touch on a regular basis to see how you're getting on with your new dog. They do not just sell you the dog and then disappear, leaving you to cope with the problems on your own. This is probably the greatest advantage to buying your dog from a responsible breeder. You not only get a healthy, well-adjusted companion, you also get a lifetime of information, advice and assistance from an expert who cares deeply about you and the animal he has sold to you. As above at #5, if "all sales are final....beware!

Remember, it is up to you, the purchaser to make your choice wisely and to do your homework. A reputable breeder will be impressed and reassured that you are concerned about what you are doing rather than impulse buying. Find a breeder with whom you are comfortable, and whose dogs you like, and pick out your dream pet.

Result: everybody wins!