The Happy Dog Training Academy

Ethical Breedeing/ Getting a puppy

**What kind of dog breeding practices do you support?**

**Are you, Considering breeding?**

If you breed even one litter you are a breeder. The question is what kind of breeder are you? Whatever your motives for wanting a litter of puppies. I hope that you really want to be a "responsible breeder", someone who has the love of the dogs at heart. This page is intended to help you think about what it takes to become that caring and responsible breeder. It isn't as obvious as you might think. When I first started hearing about truly ethical and responsible breeders, I was amazed and very pleased. Since I became a breeder and have had more puppies than I really care to remember over the last 20 some years. I should just add at this point not all have been from my own dogs, but as a foster dog breeder. When the female rejects the puppies, people will contact me to hand rear the puppies. This is my contribution to increasing the percentage of breeders that are caring, ethical and responsible.

**Considering getting a dog?** There are lots of different sources for dogs. It doesn't much matter whether you are looking for a pet or looking for a performance or show dog. The standards for a good breeder are pretty much the same. When you get a dog you can choose to (1) get one from a shelter or rescue to avoid supporting a breeder you believe is unethical, or (2) carefully select an ethical breeder.

The animal shelters are overrun with dogs produced by irresponsible breeders. I would encourage people to take a chance on dogs from shelters or from rescue. If you can get through the many hoops you have to jump through to get a rescue dog. Almost all the rescue shelters put far too many obstacles in the way. For example, if you work, if you have another unneutered dog, even if you have children under a certain age, you are unable to rehome a shelter dog. Which in my opinion are encouraging bad breeders to have more and more puppies? Many, rescue dogs, can make wonderful companions.

However, if you really want a higher degree of predictability of temperament, health, working ability, size, coat, and other factors. You can increase your chances with most of these by seeking a well-bred dog from a responsible breeder.

If you are looking for a dog and want one from an ethical breeder the first step is to decide what qualities make a breeder "ethical". Ultimately this is something only *you* can decide, but it helps to know what the possibilities are. And let me make this ***very clear***: Just because someone has a reputation for winning lots of shows and having beautiful winning dogs, ***does not*** make them a responsible breeder. A responsible breeder is judged by their care and concern for their dogs and dogs in general as demonstrated by their breeding decisions.

**Wondering what makes a "responsible breeder"?** Well, I have my own opinion, but perhaps you will get a better idea if you look at some samples from the code of ethics of various breed clubs. I think some are terrific, I think some are worthless.

And if you, are willing to take the increased risk of problems of the untested dog, and the carelessly bred dog, with many dogs losing their lives in shelters across the United Kingdom, no one should breed a dog unless they are willing to make every effort to avoid adding to that sad population. Loving a dog, and loving a breed, is reflected in what you do to benefit and protect the dog and the breed.

**Consider the Responsible Breeder**

My own standards,

1. Care about each dog you bring into this world. Treat it as part of your extended family when you place it in a new home.
2. Take positive steps to make sure the dogs you create will never land in a rescue shelter. Take the time to become familiar with shelter dogs. Do what you can to make sure your dogs don't end up dead before their time.
   * Make sure that you have homes for the puppies. Before the age of 10 weeks Require deposits to encourage commitment.
   * Interview interested parties 2 or 3 times to ensure they are a suitable match for the dogs you will be placing. Verify the information you were given.
   * Be honest about the qualities of the dogs you are placing. Explain the good points, and bad.
   * Never promote your puppies in a way to encourage reluctant buyers. If they need a special price or ask for a discount, they aren't the right home for your puppies. The home for your puppies is the home that will sacrifice to have one. It isn't money you are looking for but honest dedication.
   * It must be very clear that the person taking home your puppy **chooses**to do so. No surprise gifts no matter how earnest the belief that the giftee wants the dog. The right match is a personal matter and the person who will be closest to the dog deserves to be involved.
   * Promise to take in, or help place, dogs, or puppies you have caused to be created, no matter how old they are.
   * Remain available to serve as a resource, advise and support for typical problems encountered in raising, training, and caring for your dogs.
3. Take positive steps to ensure that the dogs you produce are a source of joy, not sorrow.
   * Know the typical genetic defects for your breed. Test for them, and do not breed a dog that may pass on serious genetic conditions.
   * Do not let your love for your dog make you blind to your obligation to others. Your dog may be healthy but may still pass on serious genetic defects. Do what you can to avoid causing heartache.
   * Do not breed your dog if you have no information on the health and fitness of both the parents of your dog, and its prospective mate. You need more than a single generation to make a good decision.
   * Research the pedigree for your dog (and any prospective mate). Find out the health and temperament of your dog's siblings, half siblings, cousins, aunt, uncles, parents, and grandparents. The more information you have the better-quality decision you can make.
   * Get an education in basic genetics or at very least find someone who has, to help you understand why two dogs that *are* ***perfectly healthy* can** produce puppies that will suffer serious genetic defects.
4. Make sure that the dogs you produce are capable of a full and happy life, sound in mind, body, and temperament. Recognize that good physical health is not enough; the dogs should be raised to be great companions too.
   * Even if you love your dog very much, and can forgive its faults of temperament, do not breed overly timid or aggressive dogs. Most lead overly restricted life’s, and many are killed long before their time, far better they never exist in the first place.
   * Understand that your love of your dog can make you blind to its faults.
   * An outsider’s eye will help both you and your puppy buyers know that your opinions are more than just wishful thinking.
   * There are plenty of good "pets" in the shelters, if that is the best you can produce you aren't making the world of dogs any better.
   * Obtain an objective evaluation of the health and fitness of your dog by testing it in a manner appropriate to the breed, in some activity, e.g. obedience, agility, hunting, tracking, search and rescue, stock dog work, conformation, flyball .
   * The goal is to increase the probability that the dogs you bring into this world will make a good companion. You do this by demonstrating skills taking intelligence, problem solving ability, dedication, or persistence, biddability or desire to please, stability of temperament among other things, and showing soundness and physical fitness.
5. Ensure that the necessary time is invested to produce puppies that will make good companions.
   * If you own the sire, ensure that the puppies you are responsible for creating will get the necessary time and attention.
   * In most cases a responsible person will need to be home full time from one week before the dam is due to whelp until the last puppy is in its new home.
   * Provide the best opportunity for building self-confidence and individual identity. Give each puppy individual attention away from its littermates daily. Failure to provide proper socialization may not produce "bad pets" but it will limit realizing the full potential of each dog, and yes sometimes *does* deprive the puppy of learning the skills necessary to be a good companion.
   * A person who cares about producing the very best out of their puppies will limit their breeding. In most breeds that means no more than one litter at a time because one litter is about all the time one human has for proper socialization.
6. If you don't want to have the same responsibility for the progeny of your dog’s then insist the dogs, you produce be spayed or neutered. Remember, you are the one in control. You can require agreement by contract. If someone insists on irresponsible breeding, you don't have to be a part of it. Use your power of contract to educate, and to enforce your role as a responsible breeder.
7. Contribute to the future wellbeing of dogs. Support and participate in programs designed to collect and maintain standardized information on the health of dogs. Centralized data collection will provide a tool to better enable thoughtful breeders to spot and avoid problems.
8. Don't breed a very young dog. The physical ability to bear puppies is not enough. The dog needs to be completely physically and mentally mature. In most breeds that means at least two years old.
9. Learn the risks before breeding. Decide whether your goals are worth risking the life or health of your dog.
10. Never sell without a written contract. Make sure the contract is clear to both of you. Make sure the contract is fair to both of you. Think about it from *both* sides - the seller and the buyer, and always keep in mind the best interests of the dog
11. Make sure the buyer has an opportunity to review the contract without feeling pressure. Send it to them in advance, or otherwise insist that they review it before they commit to taking a puppy home. Ask them to write down any questions or concerns so you can go over them together. That protects both of you. You want the person to understand both their rights and their obligations.
12. Don't expect the buyer to read the contract on their own even if you do give it to them in advance. Go over the most important provisions with them and have them initial that location in the contract. Try your best to make the buyer feel comfortable about asking questions.

**The ethical breeder**

These are questioning a person can consider in trying to evaluate the ethical qualities of a breeder. Note that these are not confined just to considering how healthy the dogs being bred are, but the contribution being made to the health and welfare of dogs generally. Part of being ethical is to avoid contributing to the problem and to contribute to the solutions.

**These are guides, not rules**

This checklist is only a guide, an ideal if you will. Just because something is missing does not mean a person is not an ethical breeder. It is up to *you* to decide what is important. This checklist is also not complete. No one can do everything. It is the overall picture that is important. If you don't have any idea how on the breed or have never owned a dog before then ask the breeder questions.

Oh, and don't have a heart attack at the length of this checklist. It isn't as though you need to spend two hours on the phone grilling the person with these questions. Use the questions to help you explore what it is that makes one breeder better than another. You will find that a lot of the answers will become obvious to you as you become more familiar with reading advertisements and talking about dogs with people. You will be surprised at how much information you like to ask, goes out the window as soon as the little legs come plodding out to see you. So, ask the questions before seeing the puppies. A responsible breeder will talk to you, asking you lots of questions before seeing the puppies. So, you can return the favour by asking as many questions as you feel, until you’re happy. If you’re not happy then walk away, so many people’s hearts are broken, weeks or months into taking your puppy home. Never get a puppy because you feel sorry for it, or because it’s so cute, you just can’t leave it. So many people get a puppy and regret it, just because of the circumstances it was in.

To make things a little easier I've created a few separate lists. The first list is things you should know before you focus on a particular breeder. Yes, you probably will need to talk to breeders to get the information. But at that point you will be in an information gathering stage, so it won't matter whether the person has puppies available. Your goal is first to learn about the breed. After you have the basics then start thinking of the breeder as a source of puppies. It will make your information gathering easier if your first question can be " I have some questions about the breed " which any competent breeder can help you with.

The second list is the initial screening in looking for a breeder that you want to deal with or find your wasting your time with. This is the point where you are ready to commit to getting a puppy. The third list is for breeders that pass the initial screening.

The last list is an educational tool. Its purpose is to broaden your perspective and allow you to be a little flexible on your expectations. It may repeat what is in the other lists or it may offer some alternative methods of achieving the same goals.

**Apply your own ethics**

If you think it’s too much trouble to work your way through the questions, well maybe your just not ready to get a puppy. Think about what your goal in getting the dog is. Your goal is to get a wonderful dog you can share your life with. If that is your only goal, then go to the shelter. If you don't need a carefully bred dog, save a life, but don't encourage poor breeding. There is no reason to support the kind of breeder that is producing the same dogs that get into the rescue system.

I understand that some people want or need a well-bred dog. I have no problem with that. My point is that if you are going to support the breeding of dogs, perhaps the only breeder that deserves your support is the one that knows how to produce something obviously better than a shelter dog. If you want something better than a shelter dog, you will need to do your homework. All the dogs in the shelter came from breeders. What kind of breeders did they come from?

There is only one person you can control. That is yourself. You can try to avoid supporting the careless breeders. If you encourage careless breeding by rewarding them, then you aren't doing what is in your power to reduce shelter deaths. Yes, sometimes it is hard to find the ethical breeder. But by insisting on it you will be encouraging that as the "way it should be" and doing what is in your power for the welfare of dogs. When breeders learn that they will have no market unless they meet certain standards, they **will** meet those standards. What kind of standards will you set for breeders you want to encourage and support? Yes, I agree with you the Government should make legislation, for ethical breeding, it is not difficult to make laws, the problem is enforcing them. For example the R,S,P,C,A, had 84,725 cases of witch 744 convictions. In the county court. Almost all received a small fine. Those that were band from owning dogs, after receiving the ban, very few of these were ever visited, and if they moved from the address the new address does not have to be given. This will not deter breeders or owners from mistreating pets.

**Sorting fact from fantasy**

Before you contact a breeder make sure you have done enough research that you can ask good questions and recognize good answers. Here are some questions **you** should be able to answer by the time you are looking for a breeder.

1. What size (height and weight) is correct for this breed? You can find these standards from (kennel club on breeds standards).
2. Does this breed need to be brushed or combed more often than once a week?
3. Does this breed require professional help in clipping or grooming?
4. How much ground needs to be covered in daily exercise?
5. What are the typical genetic diseases? How does a good breeder test for and avoid those diseases? Which of the diseases are a "must test for" and which are just a breeder going the extra mile? Are the puppies vet cheques been completed?
6. What are the most common reasons given for giving up this breed to rescue? This is perhaps the most important information you can get. If you understand why someone would give up their dog, you can be prepared. Contact the training centres, or canine behaviourist.

The above questions are not intended to cover all you need to know before deciding whether a particular breed is right for you. The purpose of knowing the answers to these questions is to help you identify a good breeder.

**Take notes, follow-up**

Take notes. It is hard to think and talk at the same time. When you are new to something the information you hear may seem reasonable, until you think about it later.



**The short list**

Although I've listed the "right" answers don't instantly give up if you get the "wrong" answer. The longlist will give you a better idea of the purpose of the questions.

You want these to be "yes"

1. Were the puppies born on the premises?
2. Does the breeder insist that the puppies be at least eight weeks before being placed in the new home?
3. Did the breeder seem happy that you are asking questions?
4. Did the breeder ask you lots of questions? Questions about your lifestyle, family, experience with dogs and other pets, why you wanted a dog? Did you feel a bit like you were applying for a million-dollar mortgage?
5. Did the breeder ask you whether you planned on breeding?
6. Will the breeder be available to offer advice and support for as long as you have the dog?
7. Does the breeder make you feel comfortable calling for advice?
8. Did the breeder go over some of the problems some people have with the breed?
9. Are the sire and dam each at least two years old?
10. Were both sire and dam tested for any genetic health problems before the breeding?
11. Does the breeder have information on the health testing of most of the immediate relatives of the sire and dam?
12. Did the breeder volunteer information on the health testing, and volunteer proof?
13. Does the breeder offer a guarantee against genetic health problems?
14. Did the breeder explain that a guarantee is not a promise that a genetic health problem won't occur, but a promise about what will happen if it does?
15. Is the guarantee at least two years long?
16. Does the guarantee allow you to keep the dog?
17. Does the guarantee allow you to choose at least a partial refund instead of another dog?
18. Is the dam a family pet (meaning does she live in the house as part of the family)? (For that matter does the breeder know what a "dam" is?)
19. Have the puppies been introduced to children? To other animals?
20. Is the breeder concerned enough about the welfare of the dog to promise to take it back (no matter how old) if you can't keep it? (Not necessarily pay you, the purpose is to avoid the shelter, ensure good placement)
21. Does the breeder believe it is important to keep in contact with puppy buyers to verify the level of success in producing a healthy dog of correct temperament?
22. Does the breeder intend to follow up on the dog as it matures and ages?
23. Does the breeder consider himself or herself a dedicated hobbyist to the breed?
24. If the breeder advertises do they focus on the important qualities such as health and temperament.

You want these to be "no"

1. Did the breeder state or imply that puppies would be arriving from off premises? (e.g. shipped in soon)
2. Will the breeder agree to sell a puppy less than 7 weeks old?
3. Was the breeder reluctant to answer questions?
4. Did the breeder seem to be defensive in answering questions?
5. Does the breeder charge different prices for dogs with or without papers?
6. Did the breeder claim that his or her lines were entirely free of genetic health problems?
7. Do you feel pressured into buying a puppy? Do you feel like the breeder is trying to "sell" the puppy (as in persuading you to buy)?
8. Does the breeder promote the puppies as gifts or offer some special incentive in price to encourage a sale?
9. Does the breeder have more than two breeds available?
10. Does the breeder consider himself or herself to be a professional in the business of breeding? That is "professional" in the sense of making money, profit, or income to be distinguished from "professional" in the sense of serious, dedicated, and knowledgeable.
11. Does the breeder charge different prices depending upon the sex of the puppy?
12. If the breeder advertises do they seem to focus on superficial qualities like colour or size while ignoring health testing?
13. Does the guarantee require the dog die or be euthanized because of the health problem?
14. Does the health guarantee require that you return the puppy?
15. Is the guarantee limited to a replacement puppy from the same breeder?

Wow! Do all those answers really have to be "correct"?

That's up to you and your standards. What I've listed is the bare minimum I would accept. There is actually a lot more I require to feel comfortable supporting a breeder. But I tried to make a list that was just "yes" or "no". However, these are merely my standards. You must decide your own standards. If you don't think a point is important then don't require it, simple as that. The list is mainly for people who don't know about the issues in the first place. And it is for people who don't know they can demand much more than they get. That's the basic difference between the person who breeds for income, and the one who breeds because they love the breed. The primary concern of the first type is to avoid losing money, if they lose too much they are out of business. The primary concern of the second type is the dogs. They expect to lose money or maybe brake even. For them breeding is a passion, not a business.

**The longlist**

There really is not a single test for responsible breeders. This longer list is intended to consider the variety of ways in which a breeder can contribute to the welfare of dogs, and thus earn the label "ethical breeder."

**The responsible breeder takes steps to protect the dog from becoming a shelter statistic.**

* Does the contract require return of the dog or an opportunity to approve placement if the buyer cannot or will not keep the dog? Does this apply no matter how old the dog is?
* Does the breeder care whether the person buying the dog is going to be a good match? What steps has the breeder taken to try to make sure the buyer is prepared to meet the needs of the dog?
  + Does the breeder interview interested people to learn if they understand what it takes to successfully raise and train the puppy? Does the breeder try to learn if the potential buyer has experience in dogs or has taken steps to become educated?
  + Is the breeder open to discussing training, feeding, house training?
  + How does the breeder gauge the seriousness of interest? Does the breeder notice whether the buyer has asked important questions regarding contract provisions, health testing, temperament, appropriate levels of exercise, and similar evidence of taking the responsibility seriously? Does the breeder volunteer information on these issues?
  + Does the breeder volunteer information on genetic health problems?

It isn't possible to produce dogs entirely free of genetic problems. So, if a breeder tries to say that there are *no* problems, they are either lying or extremely ignorant. What you want is a breeder that is honest about what potential problems exist, and who tries to reduce the risk of problems, especially the serious ones. There are some breeds that have a very low rate of problems. There are none that have no problems at all.

* + Does the breeder discuss the breeding potential for the dog? Does the breeder leave that decision entirely up to the buyer? Does the breeder discuss breeding ethics?
  + Other steps . . .
* How is the puppy buyer being supported and assisted in making the match successful?
  + What is the breeder's experience with raising and training this breed?
  + What books, pamphlets and other resources does the breeder recommend for those new to the dog world may need basic questions on puppy raising?
  + Can the breeder provide the name of trainer or behaviourist competent to serve as a referral in the event of special problems and needs?
  + In what ways is the buyer encouraged to provide proper training and socialization?
    - Does the breeder provide referral to puppy kindergarten?
    - Does the breeder provide a list of competent obedience trainers or referral sources?
  + In what way is the buyer being encouraged to ask questions and seek advice from the breeder?
    - Are the contact parameters in the contract (that they aren't isn't necessarily bad, but you want them where they can be found)
    - Is the breeder going to follow the progress of the puppy by calling? how often? is the buyer going to be expected to provide a progress report? What will be included and how often?
* Were the puppies raised in the house as members of the family?
* What steps are being taken to properly socialize each individual puppy? (Socializing is not playing, socializing is becoming familiar and comfortable with - so the puppy should have been introduced to children, other animals, a variety of people, different scents and sounds) List them
* How old will the puppies be when they are placed in their new homes? Responsible breeders will not place puppies younger than eight weeks old. This is important for the best social and mental development of the puppy. Singletons (only puppies) and those removed from the litter early miss out on critical lessons in how to be a *dog*. This *can* be overcome to some extent by finding other playmates appropriately close in age or an adult who can take the place of a skilled bitch teaching social manners.
* How often will the puppy need to go outside at that point, and what is the effect on future house training if the puppy cannot get outside that often? The younger the puppy the more often it has to go out. If the person taking care of the pup cannot get it out as often as it needs to go then house training can be made much more difficult. At eight weeks of age a puppy can wait about 2 hours before it needs to go out. It will need to go out more frequently when it is active, eating or drinking.
* What steps will the buyer need to take for proper socialization? What is the buyer's plan for taking those steps?
* How is the temperament of the puppy evaluated?
* How are the family and puppy matched? Can the buyer just pick any puppy? Or will the breeder interview the buyer and try to make the match?

**Takes steps to ensure that the dogs being produced are an improvement on health, temperament and qualities as a companion.**

Remember, it isn't possible to produce the perfect dog. What a breeder can do is become educated on what genetic diseases are, how they are expressed (become obvious instead of hidden), how serious they are in terms of risks to quality of life, and how to balance the risks so the dogs have the best chance at a good quality of life. So, if you are looking at the qualities of a breeder what you want to know is how well educated the breeder has become on these issues, and whether the breeder makes good use of that education.

If a breeder can only tell you that a vet checked the dog and found it healthy then they do not have the information they need to breed healthy dogs. Even in breeds with a very low rate of problems the educated breeder knows enough to know the most common problems in \*other\* breeds and how those problems are discovered. Again, look at the source of information. Sorry, but veterinarians \*are not\* the best source of learning what genetic problems affect what breeds. They may well be able to tell you what problems pets have in general. They are generally more concerned with the general dog population, and what problems are affecting the life of the dog before them specifically. They leave it to breeders to detect and avoid the potential for problems in future dogs.

* List the typical genetic diseases for your breed.
* Where did the list come from? What resources were used to learn about the typical genetic diseases?
* What is the level of seriousness of those diseases? Which are correctable or treatable? Which affect the quality of life for the dog, or are a burden on the owner?
* What steps can be taken to reduce the risk of the serious genetic disease?
  + For each genetic problem list how, the problem can be identified. Explain whether an ordinary veterinary exam will discover the problem at the age the dog is to be bred. Confirm whether carriers can be identified by blood, DNA, or other tests (make sure you know what a carrier is). Determine how information can be gathered about problems that cannot be detected by test. What evidence can the breeder give to the buyer that these steps have been taken?
  + What books, seminars or classes were used to learn about basic genetics, breed specific problems, and steps that can be used to reduce the risk of those problems?
* What evidence can the breeder show you of steps taken for the good genetic health of this particular litter? Certificates? Paperwork?
* Are the great-grandparents still alive? If any are not, what did they die of? And the progeny of the great-grandparents? What is the health of other dogs in the line?
* Can the breeder provide you with health clearance information of at least some other dogs in the line, not just the parents?  
  For the most part a breeder should know the health and fitness of the immediate family members. Making good breeding decisions requires knowing the health of as much of the immediate family as possible. The more information the breeder has on other dogs in the pedigree the more confident you can be that the breeder has been making good decisions.
* Does the health guarantee offered reflect confidence in the genetic health of the puppies? A two-year guarantee is a bare minimum. It avoids covering late onset problems such as blindness and cardiac problems. Such a short guarantee suggests the breeder doesn't really understand the difference between fault and responsibility. A breeder who truly stands behind their dogs accepts responsibility for genetic problems even if it is not their fault that those problems occur. Less than a two-year guarantee is simply unacceptable as so many conditions will not be detectable at an early age.
* Steps taken to produce dogs of predictable qualities.
  + Does the breeder possess a physical copy of the breed standard?
  + What resources does the breeder use to get more technical information on the breed such as pedigrees, genetic problems, advanced training etc.?
  + Can the breeder list the dam's strengths and weaknesses in relation to the breed standard?
    - How were these strengths and weaknesses evaluated?
    - How did the person who evaluated the strengths and weaknesses obtain the expertise to make the evaluation?
    - How can the objectivity of the evaluation be assessed?
  + Can the breeder list the sire's strengths and weaknesses in relation to the breed standard?
    - How were these strengths and weaknesses evaluated?
    - How did the person who evaluated the strengths and weaknesses obtain the expertise to make the evaluation?
    - How can the objectivity of the evaluation be assessed?
  + Compare the temperament of the dam to what is common in the breed
    - How were these qualities evaluated?
    - How did the person making the evaluation obtain the expertise to make the evaluation?
    - How can the objectivity of the evaluation be assessed?
    - In what way do these qualities benefit the breed?
  + Compare the temperament of the sire to what is common in the breed
    - How were these qualities evaluated?
    - How did the person making the evaluation obtain the expertise to make the evaluation?
    - How can the objectivity of the evaluation be assessed?
    - In what way do these qualities benefit the breed?
  + List the other dogs in the pedigree that were examined for health or temperament before the decision was made to breed this sire to this dam.
    - What strengths and weakness were discovered?
    - What is the expected influence of those strengths and weaknesses?
  + Are these puppies expected to conform to breed standard? If they do not conform to breed standard, then in what way do they deviate from breed standard? If there is deviation, why did that occur? Note, this is not necessarily a bad thing just something both breeder and buyer should be clear on. Be aware that deviation from standard tends to represent extremes - the very worst breeders, and some of the very best. The worst situation is a breeder who either doesn't know, or doesn't care if there is a deviation (i.e. is thoughtless about it).
  + Any deviation from breed standards should be thoughtful, well researched and expressly disclosed in the contract. The breeder should be prepared to discuss the breed standard and the degree to which the puppies will conform or deviate from that standard, the goals of the breeding in general, and the reason for selecting that sire and that dam in particular.
  + What has the breeder produced already? If the breeder has produced puppies in the past has the breeder kept in touch? Is the breeder concerned with their welfare? Has the breeder recorded their health and temperament as they mature and age?
  + What is the breeder doing to follow up on what they have produced? Trying to do a good job of producing healthy puppies of appropriate temperament becomes a futile exercise if the breeder does nothing to find out whether those attempts have been successful. What went right and what went wrong is vital in continuing to improve. Surprises happen all the time. Genetics is complex and sometimes what seems like a perfect match ends up with unexpected problems. Really critical problems might come to the attention of even the disinterested breeder. But to ensure that apparently smaller things, like allergies, are caught breeders need to keep in touch, show an interest and expressly ask about things the average person might not think important enough to report.
* Evaluating the buyer to determine a good match for the breed is important as is making sure there are competent buyers available. What steps has the breeder taken to locate potential buyers before the mating?
* What questions did the breeder ask you?
* A breeder who cares for dogs does their very best to make sure that the puppy goes to a home that has both the willingness and the ability to provide what the puppy needs to grow up into a happy, healthy wonderful pet. That means the breeder is going to need some information from you. Be prepared to provide the answers and please don't feel insulted. It may not feel like it but they aren't asking questions to make you feel bad. They are just doing the best for their puppies. If you aren't comfortable with the breeder, or how they deal with you, then move on to another. Just understand that their goal is to do the best they can for the puppy, and the breeder is human and may have a hard time coming up with the right tone. Also don't feel that just because you made a mistake or had a bad experience that no breeder will ever consider you "worthy" of a puppy. It is true that some just won't take a chance. Most, however, just want to know what has changed. What will prevent the same kind of problem from happening again.
* A breeder will want to know about your experience with dogs. Your experience can range from never having shared a home with a dog, to growing up with a dog, to having complete responsibility for a dog. The breed (or breeds) will be important, as will the age you got the dog, how long you had it, and your level of responsibility in caring for it (that is did you just live in the same household or were you the primary caretaker). If you taught the dog anything more than basic good manner that is a big plus.
* A breeder will want to know who else will be sharing the household or will be regular visitors. The experience needed to have a dog in which children are a regular part of the household is higher than if generally only adults are present. If you are expecting a child within two years of getting the dog expect to be questioned especially closely as that is an extra challenge for the average, less experienced person.
* Similarly, a good breeder will want to know whether other pets either share the household or will be regular visitors. If there are other pets the breeder should ask further questions about your experience on supervising and managing so that there can be a safe and peaceful coexistence. If your community limits the number of pets you can keep in one household the breeder will expect you to know that information and to commit to not violating those limits.
* A breeder will want to know about the space you live in. One of the most important questions is whether you own or rent. If you rent, you should expect the breeder to ask for proof that the landlord permits dogs. One of the highest risks to dogs is being sneaked into an apartment where pets are forbidden. Many a dog has lost its life in the pound when the person faced the choice of eviction or getting rid of the dog. If the space is relatively confined the breeder will want to know whether you have taken that into consideration. Different breeds have different indoor activity levels. You may be asked whether you have a fenced yard. Some breeders will say they will never place a dog in a home without a fenced yard. I understand their rationale but I'm not entirely sure I agree with the results. All too often the presence of a fenced yard means the dog never sees anything but the house and yard. In any case you should be prepared to answer to the real concern, which is how will you ensure the dog is safe and controlled both in getting exercise and in going out for bodily relief. As part of that the breeder should be given specific information about your plans for daily exercise and training - how long and how much of each.
* The more specific and well thought out your plans for teaching the dog how to be well mannered the better the breeder will feel. Even better is to have specific plans and honest commitment to getting involved in regular activity with the dog. That could be any number of things from the informal to the formal.
* Getting into the touchier areas the breeder will want to make sure you are both aware and realistic about both the time and financial commitment you are making. Before you contact a breeder, you should have gotten a good idea of costs annual veterinary visits, licensing, grooming, training, food, supplies and allowance for emergency vet care. Try to save the breeder the awkwardness of asking by volunteering your awareness and ability to meet those needs.
* Expect to be asked why you want a dog, and why you want this breed. One of the big reasons dogs don't keep their original homes is that people aren't always realistic in their expectations. Permanent placement requires realistic expectations by the buyer.
* A common theme is to get a dog "for the kids". Any responsible breeder will instantly focus in on that reason. A dog is not an educational tool. There is certainly much value and learning in pet ownership but the desire and motivation to have a dog must start with the parties responsible for the dog - the parents. If keeping the dog is dependent upon the interest and involvement of the children a responsible breeder will not place the dog in that family.
* If you are young, the breeder may again pose awkward but necessary questions about your plans. Showing the breeder that you have not only thought ahead but you are realistic about your ability to continue to provide for the needs of the dog is important. For example, if you are a teenager getting a dog the good breeder will want to make sure that there are solid and realistic plans for the dog when you leave home. If you think you are going to take the dog with you then you will be expected to know and be able to deal with the difficulties and expense of finding housing. If the dog will be left behind, then someone else in the household will have to show the same love and caring you have before the breeder will ever let the dog go to you. Otherwise, when you leave the dog may suffer.

OK, if you have ploughed through all that let me take a moment to remind you. You won't find a breeder that does all of the above. The purpose of the list is to help you get a feel for what responsible breeding is all about. It is to help you understand the reasons for requirements or provisions that might otherwise seem bizarre or overbearing. It is also to help you get enough knowledge to distinguish the good talker from the good doer. A great talker has reasons for everything, but if you know what to ask their story doesn't hold together. Don't be afraid to ask questions. The better the breeder the happier they will be that you care enough to not just swallow things whole. On the other hand, don't be offensive about it. You will want to build a relationship of trust because if you have found a truly caring breeder you have found gold. Choosing the right dog/ puppy.

There are dog breeds for everyone, it’s just picking the right one.

Who could resist the little sweet puppy in the shop window, thankfully that has stopped? Or the little puppy you see advertised on social media. But the first mistake you can make when picking a puppy, is to buy on impulse.

Getting your first puppy or adult dog is a long-term commitment, that is going to require some planning and a lot of thought. There are many breeds, size, appearance, and exercise needed. So, it can take a lot of research. There are over 150 breeds of dog. If you are just starting your search, here are some things you should consider.

1, Why do you want a dog.

2, Have you got a job for the dog, dogs need to work for mental stimulation. Some of the jobs you might wish, Companion, Playmate for the kids, Special activity such as hunting or search and rescue, Special tasks such as therapy work or service dog, home, or office security.

3, How much experience do you have with dogs?

Some dogs are great for first time owners, such as Golden Retrievers, cockerpoo and Greyhounds. They are relatively easy to train and have a gentle temperament. Other breeds such as Fox Terrier, Border collie and Dalmatian need an owner who is experienced working with dogs.

4, How much time do you have?

Exercise and grooming are the two areas which can require a lot of time. Some breeds like the Fox Terrier, collie require lots of room, lots of activity and as much as 2 – 3 hours per day of exercise and activity. Other breeds such as the Great Dane, Greyhound are great apartment dogs, and a good half hour walk can be sufficient for them.

A wash and wear breed such as a Boston Terrier, Schnauzer Breeds requires very little grooming time, compared to an Old English Sheepdog or a Afghan Hound.

4, Living with your dog

The size of your home and yard, Your lifestyle and family activities, Your finances, Your family members.

5, Does anyone have allergies to dogs?

Some breeds like the poodle do not shed and are hypoallergenic. Other breeds, like the German Shepherd or Sheep Dogs are heavy shedders twice a year and the border Collie, Dalmatian sheds year-round.

You can find health and temperament information for many breeds, as well as a list of breeders, through the Kennel Club. A local dog show is an excellent place to physically meet dogs of different breeds and talk to breeders. You should do your research into breeders, there are good and bad.

**Finding a puppy,** once you have identified the breed or breeds that will fit your lifestyle, the search begins for that new family member. You have several choices:

**Purebred breeder,** with a purebred breeder, breeding pair is health tested, usually require spay/neuter for pets, provide support after the puppy is purchased

**Hobby breeder,** Little to no health testing, no contract, no support

**Commercial breeder/retail purchase,** No information on pedigree or health, no support**, Rescue dogs**

Puppies usually turned in because of problems, ask questions and make sure you can handle the issues for which the puppy was turned in.

**Puppy mill**, It is unlikely that anyone knowingly purchases from a puppy mill. Here are some puppies mill red flags:

The seller has multiple breeds and combinations

The seller does not ask you any questions other than money and pick-up arrangements.

You are not allowed to meet the parents or visit the home or business

The seller always seems to have a lot of puppies for sale

The seller has no idea how many litters the female has produced

The seller does not offer a contract other than a purchase agreement

Selecting the right breed for your lifestyle, and the right puppy for your family is well worth the time and effort spent in research. A healthy, well-socialized puppy easily becomes a valued family member.