

Questions to Ask The Dog Breeder

Some dog breeders are simply irresponsible. The term "backyard breeder" is sometimes used to describe dog breeders with little experience or knowledge. Typically, they breed dogs without taking the time to make good genetic matches, or to have dogs registered with the appropriate kennel club/breed club. Though the backyard breeder is not considered to be as unethical as those who run puppy mills one can consider a backyard breeder the opposite of a responsible dog breeder.

Some backyard breeders are just looking to make a profit off of so-called purebred dogs that they own. They let them breed together without knowledge of their family histories (health and behavioral, in particular). They pay little or no attention to genetic health issues in both the parents and the puppies. They often charge less money for the puppies than a responsible breeder, but still more money than they should (no one should pay for puppies that were bred carelessly). These dogs may seem less expensive, but in the long run, you may end up paying more for these dogs when health issues develop. In many cases, these breeders will not take back the puppies if something goes wrong. Never trust a breeder who won't guarantee the puppies.

There are other cases where someone has dogs that were accidentally bred and a litter of puppies was the result, or a family decided to breed its dogs "just one time" or "just for fun." These methods are not recommended, as the result could be unhealthy and/or unwanted puppies. These people are not usually aware of the fact that their actions are unethical. If they try to charge money for the puppies, it is unethical.

Be aware: even if you get a free puppy from this situation, you may or may not end up with an unhealthy dog down the road. In these situations, it is best to ask the dog owners to spay and neuter their dogs (they need to stop breeding the dogs). If you don't mind getting a puppy with an unknown genetic history, go to your local shelter or rescue group. You can find a cute puppy that had already been checked by a vet.

How to Avoid Bad Dog Breeders

If you are determined to get a purebred puppy, then you will probably want to start looking for a dog breeder. If "papers" (registration) or parentage are not important to you, then you should consider adoption instead. Seek out a breed-specific rescue group or even your local animal shelter. If you care about dogs, one of the worst things you can do is purchase a dog from a bad breeder. Perhaps the only thing worse is purchasing a puppy from a pet store; supporting a business that puts profit over the welfare of its animals is not something a true dog lover would ever do.

When you find a dog breeder, it is essential that you check references. Talk to other families that have purchased dogs from that breeder. Check that the breeder is affiliated with the local and national breed clubs and a national kennel club (such as the AKC). Most importantly, make sure you visit the breeding facility and meet the puppies' parents (mother at least).

Questions to Ask The Dog Breeder

- *What type of care is required for this specific breed? Does the breed have specific needs I should be aware of?*
 - o The breeder should be able to give you detailed answers that confirm what you have learned from your own research on the breed.
 - o *How long have you been breeding dogs? How long have you bred this specific dog breed?*
 - o It should be several years, and the breeder will have ideally worked with a mentor at the beginning (someone else who had worked with the breed for a long time).
 - o *Do you sell your dogs to pet stores, puppy brokers, wholesalers, or online?*
 - o If the answer is "yes," walk away immediately.
 - o *Can I visit the facilities where you breed and house your dogs?*
 - o If the answer is "no," then run!
 - o *Can I meet the litter of puppies and their mother?*
 - o If the answer is "no," walk away. Note that it is normal for the father to be offsite.
 - o *What is the health and behavior history of this line (parents, grandparents, etc)?*
 - o The breeder should be able to tell you about the dogs going back a couple of generations.
- *What genetic issues do you test the adult dogs for before breeding? What tests do the puppies get before you sell them?*
 - o Research the breed and find out what tests (OFA, CERT, etc.) are recommended by the national breed club. If this breeder has not tested the dogs, you should look for another breeder.
 - o *Can I see the breed registration papers for the puppies and their parents?*
 - o If the breeder cannot produce these, leave without buying a puppy.
 - o *What happens if my dog is diagnosed with a hereditary disease? Does the puppy I buy come with a guarantee?*
 - o The answer should be that the breeder will take back the dog, and/or refund all or part of the fee you paid for the dog, and/or work with you to have the dog treated (if you want to keep the dog). A good breeder wants to know if the puppies remain in good health.

Other Warning Signs of a Bad Breeder

if the answers to the above questions are appropriate, there are still some things you should evaluate. Also, if you notice anything that just doesn't "feel right," then you should do some more research on the breeder. Here are some of the other signs that indicate you are dealing with an irresponsible breeder:

- Dogs in the facility appear to be in poor health.
- More than three types of dog breeds are being bred, or they breed a lot of unrecognized breeds, such as Cock-a-poos, Goldendoodles etc.

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- The dogs have no titles, either showing, working, or sports, whatever the animals are being bred for. This likely means the breeder does not breed to better the overall conformation or working style of the breed. Breeding solely for "pet quality" means breeding for money rather than for the betterment of the breed.
- There is no mandatory spaying/neutering of pet quality animals.
- They always have puppies for sale, sometimes two or three litters at a time.
- The breeder doesn't screen you or ask questions about your home environment and the life you can provide for the puppy.
- The puppies are ready to go before the proper age (under eight weeks of age).
- Advertises "rare" colors, sizes, or other traits (such as "rare" white Dobermans, or Great Danes, "king-sized" German Shepherds, etc.). These traits are often not in accordance with breed standards and can lead to health or behavior problems.
- They advertise or sell their puppies for greatly reduced prices

