

If you're interested in a more unusual dog breed, are certain that you want a puppy, or have some very specific needs in your next dog, then finding your companion through a breeder could be your only or your best option.

There is nothing wrong with getting a puppy from a breeder, but there are different kinds of breeders. You need to be informed so that you can make the right choice.

What to Look for in a Good Dog Breeder?

Not all breeders are created equal, and you want to make sure that you select a breeder that fits with what you need but also meets a list of requirements. Here are some of the things to watch for:

- A breeder should never, ever mind talking with you and answering questions. In fact, they should be asking YOU a lot of questions. Be prepared to talk about your family, your future dog's living arrangements, offer references, and discuss your previous experiences with pets.
- Be careful about breeders that have different 'prices' for male versus female puppies or litters. Good breeders don't breed for profit, nor do they have basement clearance sales. Anyone that offers you a steal of a deal is probably not desirable.
- A good breeder has a limited number of dogs and a limited number of litters per year. They do not breed to have an endless supply of puppies. You should probably be prepared to be on a waiting list.
- A good breeder should always be knowledgeable about their breed. Be sure to ask what health testing they do with their adult dogs and puppies. Most breeds have some health issues that need to be checked. For many of the large breeds, OFA testing is important for hips and elbows. CERF testing is done for eyes in breeds like Labradors, and heart check-ups are important for breeds that have problems with PDAs and other issues. If your breeder doesn't know what health issues the breed has and/or doesn't do any testing, don't purchase a puppy from them.
- Does the breeder offer a written contract? A written contract protects you and tells you exactly what the breeder will or won't guarantee. Do they have health guarantees? What about poor temperament or a genetic fault?
- Do they require spay and neuter and/or limited registration with the AKC for "pet" puppies? This shows they care about dog overpopulation and care about the ultimate purpose of their puppies.
- Do they belong to any dog clubs or are active in the breed? Most breeders continue to have puppies in order to better the breed. A breeder should be active in a local or national club as well as do something with their dogs like conformation, obedience, tracking, herding, Schutzhund, field work, etc.

Other Considerations:

Once you have narrowed your search down to just one or two breeders, ask if you might come for a personal visit to see the dogs. It is important you visit without puppies involved because all puppies are cute. You need to see what the puppies will turn into.

Be wary if they are not receptive to you visiting, won't freely show you their dogs or kennel facilities, or the dogs appear to be overly shy, fearful, or aggressive. Remember, what you see in the adult dogs is a strong indication of what you are likely to see in your puppy as an adult.



Find out everything you need to know about the puppy and its background. You should receive a pedigree of the litter, a medical record (when you purchase the puppy), and photographs of the parents. Be sure to place a deposit on a puppy, if you are interested in holding one.

Finding the right breeder can be a lifetime relationship and will prove valuable as your puppy grows. Make sure you find one that you are comfortable with.

To begin your search, visit the American Kennel Club: www.akc.org to locate the national parent club for the breed you are interested in. Each club can point you to various breeders located near you.