

How to find a good breeder

By Gwen Bailey

By the time puppies are 7-8 weeks old and ready to go to new homes, they will vary greatly in brain development depending on how they have been raised. This will have a profound effect on their future behaviour.

Puppies kept in isolated or barren environment with limited access to adults, children, other animals and other situations will find it very difficult to cope in a normal busy household. They are likely to be anxious and fearful which may develop into aggression and other behaviour problems later.

To avoid this, always choose a puppy that has been raised in a family home. Always insist on seeing the mother with the puppies and check on her temperament. Avoid buying puppies where the mother is absent, can't be trusted with people around her puppies, or is aggressive. Make sure the puppies are well socialised with people, and well habituated to novel objects, smells, sounds and sights.

Ask how the puppies have been socialised (see ['How to Socialise a Litter'](#) for how it should be done).

Recognizing a good breeder

Good breeders take care to select good parents, provide proper health care, take time to raise a litter properly and put in a lot of effort to ensure well-adjusted, healthy puppies. They rarely breed more than 2 or 3 litters a year, sometimes less than that. Finding a good breeder is not easy, but it is definitely worth the effort. You may like to begin by going to dog shows and talking to breeders and owners there about their dogs. Dog shows are advertised in the specialist dog press or via the internet. Find out about breed clubs and ask people who run them how to find a good breeder. Usually, these people are real breed enthusiasts and will have lots of useful knowledge. Ask people who own nice dogs of your chosen breed where their dog came from and talk to their breeder.

Good breeders do not breed often and do not breed to order. They will be able to tell you when their next litter is planned so be prepared to wait – if you have chosen your breeder well, it will be worth it.

A good breeder is one who fulfils the following criteria. Be prepared to ask questions and if you cannot get satisfactory answers, look elsewhere.

A good breeder

1. will be concerned about the health and temperament of the puppies (rather than breeding only to win prizes in the show ring)
2. allows you to see the mother with the puppies.
3. lets the puppies live in the house or have regular access.
4. socialises the puppies with people and other animals and gets them used to things they will encounter when older (see videos above to tell from the puppies if they are doing all that is necessary)
5. is knowledgeable about dogs.
6. cares about what happens to the puppies they breed.

Puppy Farms

Avoid buying a puppy from an advert in the paper or from a pet shop. Both of these can be outlets for puppy farmers who keep dogs in small cages, breed from them continuously, and often take the puppies away from the mother too early. The resulting puppies are often physically compromised, unhealthy and often show abnormal behaviour caused by the early stress. It is not possible to tell whether a puppy comes from such a place just by its appearance so it is better to avoid these outlets altogether.

Puppy farmers go to some lengths to disguise their trade. They may arrange to meet you in the car park of a pub or service station close to your home. Or they may deliver the puppy to a colleague's home so that you see the puppies there rather than on their premises. Avoid places which keep many different breeds of puppy under the same roof. It is very likely that these puppies came from puppy farms and you may end up with problems as a result.

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