

Breeder Info

Choosing a Breeder

Finding a good reputable breeder is challenging and may take some time. The best source would be to contact an obedience club — there are many clubs that have obedience classes at local parks. Or, if you admire a friend's dog, ask them for information on how they found the breeder of their dog. Don't be surprised if a good breeder asks you a lot of questions — they want to make sure they place puppies in loving responsible homes. Also another source may be certain breed rescue groups. Some rescue groups work closely with breeders to help someone find the right fit. Also breed rescue groups are a great resource to finding that special pet. "Second hand" dogs make some of the best friends and companions you can ever hope for.

Please do not purchase a puppy as a "gift" for someone else; instead offer a gift certificate and help them find the right dog. There is a wonderful book called "Choosing the Right Dog for You" and it's available at most bookstores and at Amazon.com. This book describes almost every AKC breed and some rare breeds where you will find out about temperament, life longevity, grooming requirements, training requirements, personality traits, and some genetic health problems to watch out for. This is a worthwhile investment if you don't know what kind of dog you (and your family) will be happy with.

Please, please do not get a puppy for Christmas! As a former volunteer, I was always guaranteed a puppy to foster by New Year's Eve — when the puppy got to be too much work after the holidays. Puppies/dogs have feelings and are easily stressed during holidays. No reputable breeder will sell puppies during the holidays except to those that were specifically waiting for a particular litter.

Matisse being cool with Judy's boots

Before going out to find, adopt, or buy a puppy or dog, do your homework on the breed you are interested in. Ask friends who have dogs what they like or dislike about their breed. Visit several dog obedience clubs or training facilities and ask their opinions of what breeds may be suitable to your personality, life style and YOUR temperament. Here are some basic observations I go by:

* A reputable breeder will be willing to talk to you at length about the good and bad of their breed's physical and temperament attributes. Any breeder that tells you "he/she has a very nice dog" run away and keep looking. Nice is not enough in this litigious world; you want a dog that will fit in (with training) to your world and be a good canine citizen and companion.

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* A reputable breeder will not breed more than 1-2 litters per year. Watch out for breeders that have a constant supply of puppies or dogs. They also will deal primarily with one type of breed — not 5-6 different breeds. These types of breeders are called “puppy millers” and you should avoid them like the plague.

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* Ask a breeder about the types of obedience awards their dogs have earned — forget about all the ribbons for the show dogs. This does not guarantee that the dog/bitch has sound structure or temperament — it just means they won a beauty contest. Some obedience titles to look for include:

I'm a Princess

AKC Obedience Titles (there are many more in this category — check the AKC website for more information about the breeds and tests) (CD, CDX, UD, UDX, etc.)

- * Canine Good Citizen
- * Agility / Flyball
- * Sheep Herding
- * Scent Tracking (TD, TDX, VST)
- * Schutzhund (German Sport includes obedience, tracking and protection)
- * Ring Sport (French Training includes obedience, tracking and protection)
- * Therapy or Guide Dog Titles

* A reputable breeder will help you find the right puppy or dog for you; they may even suggest you consider a breed-specific rescue organization. Many reputable breeders work with their breed's rescue groups.

* A reputable breeder will inform you of what types of vaccinations your puppy or dog will need and provide a schedule of when puppy shots are given. They may also have a referral of a vet in your area.

* A reputable breeder will let you meet both the sire and the dam of a litter — I mean meet, not look at through a cage door.

* A reputable breeder will have paperwork certifying that their dogs are free of hereditary defects, such as eye tests, hip x-rays, blood diagnostics, etc. For example, large breeds may have a tendency towards hip dysplasia; the breeding couple should be certified with good to excellent hips — a fair rating in my opinion is not good enough. You can also check with UC Davis's animal registration system where they keep records of various health tests and results. Don't be afraid to ask them to explain the paperwork to you if you are a novice.

* A reputable breeder raises the puppies in a home environment with a lot of safe human socializing, as well as letting the pups remain in a litter until they are 8 weeks old. Between 7-8 weeks most puppies learn “soft mouth” biting and makes your job of teaching a puppy to not bite a human a lot easier. If a puppy is taken out of the litter before 6 weeks, it loses valuable puppy socializing periods.

* A reputable breeder may turn you down if they don't think you can provide the proper environment and lifestyle for their puppies. If a reputable breeder turns you down, maybe you should seriously rethink about getting a puppy/dog.

Do not buy a puppy from a store — these poor things come from puppy millers who breed hundreds of sick animals each year and are the major source of dogs with serious health and temperament problems.

Do not get a puppy from someone at the local grocery store who just happened to let their “nice dog” have a litter for the kids to see — if you really want your kids to see “live birth” go to a library and get a video for your child's age group. You might suggest that they take the puppies to a rescue organization for their breed to be placed in foster homes for training and observation of any health problems.

If you have any questions and you want my opinion or a referral, I'm happy to take your emails. If you are a breeder and you don't like what's on this page — tough. I worked in GSD rescue for 2 years and raised 10 puppies — all from irresponsible breeders — and most of them had some sort of health or behavior problems which had to be solved before being adopted by their forever families. Great kudos to those who continue to foster and care for these dogs to get them ready to be adopted.

Breeders ask yourself this question: do you know where every puppy is that you bred and how it's being raised, not just who you sold it to?

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