

## **How to Identify a Good Dog Breeder—Tips from The Humane Society of the United States**

*Look for a breeder who at a minimum:*

- Keeps her dogs in the home and as part of the family—not outside in kennel runs.
- Has dogs who appear happy and healthy, are excited to meet new people, and don't shy away from visitors.
- Shows you where the dogs spend most of their time—an area that is clean and well maintained.
- Encourages you to spend time with the puppy's parents—at a minimum, the pup's mother—when you visit.
- Breeds only one or two types of dogs, and is knowledgeable about what are called “breed standards” (the desired characteristics of the breed in areas such as size, proportion, coat, color, and temperament).
- Has a strong relationship with a local veterinarian and shows you records of veterinary visits for the puppies. Explains the puppies' medical history and what vaccinations your new puppy will need.
- Is well versed in the potential genetic problems inherent in the breed—there are specific genetic concerns for every breed—and explains to you what those concerns are. The breeder should have had the puppy's parents tested (and should have the results from the parents' parents) to ensure they are free of those defects, and she should be able to provide you with documentation for all testing she has done through organizations such as the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA).
- Gives you guidance on caring and training for your puppy and is available for assistance after you take your puppy home.
- Provides references of other families who have purchased puppies from her.
- Feeds high quality “premium” brand food.
- Doesn't always have puppies available but rather will keep a list of interested people for the next available litter.
- Actively competes with her dogs in conformation trials (which judge how closely dogs match their “breed standard”), obedience trials (which judge how well dogs perform specific sets of tasks on command), or tracking and agility trials. Good breeders will also work with local, state, and national clubs that specialize in their specific breed.
- Encourages multiple visits and wants your entire family to meet the puppy before you take your puppy home.
- Provides you with a written contract and health guarantee and allows plenty of time for you to read it thoroughly. The breeder should *not* require that you use a specific veterinarian.

*In addition to the above criteria, you'll want a breeder who requires some things of you, too. A reputable breeder doesn't just sell her puppies to the first interested buyer!*

*The breeder should require you to:*

- Explain why you want a dog.
  
- Tell her who in the family will be responsible for the pup's daily care, who will attend training classes, where the dog will spend most of her time, and what "rules" have been decided upon for the puppy—for example, will the dog be allowed on furniture?
  
- Provide a veterinary reference if you already have pets or, if you do not have other pets, she should ask which practices you are considering for your new puppy.
  
- Provide proof from your landlord or condominium board (if you rent or live in a condominium complex) that you are allowed to have companion animals.
  
- Sign a contract that you will spay or neuter the dog unless you will be actively involved in showing him or her (which applies to show-quality dogs only).
  
- Sign a contract stating that you will return the dog to the breeder should you be unable to keep the dog at *any* point in the dog's life.