

How to Choose a “Good Breeder”

By Jan Schrimmer

Making the decision to bring a 4-legged forever family member into your home is an important decision involving time and research. Make sure you do your homework!

- Read the AKC (American Kennel Club) standard for the breed(s) you are considering. Read books and articles to learn more about each breed and any hereditary medical conditions, making your final decision based on your family’s lifestyle.
- Contact the AKC and/or the national/local breed club to get a list of breeders in your area. (The [Dachshund Club of America](#) lists breeders on their website.) You should be wary of breeders who are **not** a member of the local and/or national breed club.

Now the interview process begins! Do not be afraid to ask questions. You are the consumer and are potentially buying a family member who could be with you 10-15+ years. Here are questions you will want to ask each breeder on your list.

- How long has the breeder been breeding dogs?
- How many litters do they have each year?
- How many adult dogs are at the facility most of the time?
- Does that breeder show his/her dogs in conformation, obedience, agility, or rally events? What are some of the AKC titles that breeder has on their dogs (conformation champion, obedience titles, etc.) How many conformation or performance events are in the pedigree of the puppies? *Although you may not be planning to enter your dog into AKC sanctioned shows or events, purchasing a pet from a breeder who is involved in these events, demonstrates their commitment to breed standards and betterment of the breed.*
- Does that breeder offer a health guarantee? If so, what is it?
- Does that breeder offer a contract on these puppies? (A contract protects the breeder and the buyer. *For help interpreting the contract or health guarantee, have someone in your local breed club review it.*)
- Does the breeder offer a three generation pedigree? *Typically, breeders will provide the buyer a pedigree that lists all ancestors for the last 3 or more generations. Check to see how many champions or performance titled ancestors are in the puppy’s pedigree. Having “titled” dogs in a pedigree suggests that the breeders are serious and responsible about the quality of the dogs produced.*
- If there is a hereditary issue in this breed, does the breeder do genetic testing on all of his breeding stock? *Ask to see the results.*
- Has the litter had a health exam from the breeder’s veterinarian? What vaccines have the puppies had? Has the puppy had a fecal check to make sure he doesn’t have any internal parasites?
- Are there other stipulations on the contract? Most reputable breeders will ask that the puppy be spayed or neutered.
- Is the breeder selling the puppy on a limited registration or complete registration? *Limited registration means that if the buyer bred the dog, the puppies would not be able to be registered or shown.*
- Will the breeder take the puppy back if, at any point in the dog’s life, you find you cannot or do not want to keep the puppy/dog? Obviously, if the period of time listed on the health guarantee has lapsed, you should not expect to have your money refunded.
- Will that breeder be available if you need advice or help with training the puppy or grooming the puppy? If you are looking at an older puppy, ask if the puppy is on heartworm medication and if the puppy has been micro chipped or tattooed.

After you have conducted your phone interviews and are comfortable with the breeder, the next step is to look at the litter of puppies. PLEASE, PLEASE follow your gut instinct when you get to the home/kennel. If your gut tells you to turn around and leave, please do it. There are so many people who have purchased puppies because they felt sorry for them and wanted to get them out of an unhealthy environment. Don't do that! All you are doing is adding to the reason that breeder continues to breed and sell dogs.

Here are things to keep in mind during your visit(s):

- Is the home/kennel clean? *Sometimes, especially with everyone's busy life, a home or kennel may look a little disorderly but it should not be dirty! You should not be able to smell strong odors of urine and feces.*
- Do the animals have adequate space to move around and exercise?
- Is there constant access to clean, fresh water?
- What dog food does the breeder use? *You want to ensure that a good quality, name brand food is used.*
- Ask for a tour of the home and/or kennel? If any areas are "off limits" ask why? *Some breeders will not want you to walk in on a new mom and her puppies as it can upset the mom, which is a reasonable answer.*
- Ask to see the mother of the puppies and the father, if the breeder has him available. The dogs should be clean, well fed, and outgoing.
- Check the dogs' nails, ears, and teeth to make sure the breeder is grooming the dogs on a regular basis.
- Ask for references, especially the breeder's veterinarian.

Don't be surprised if the breeder has his own list of questions to ask about you. Some breeders will actually insist on going to the potential buyer's home to inspect it.

Please be respectful of the breeder. If you have made an appointment for a certain time to go and see puppies, please be on time or call the breeder if you are going to be late or not able to keep the appointment. You should not plan to visit several breeder's without disinfecting shoes, clothes, and washing hands and arms prior to going into each facility.

Very small children should be left at home for the initial visit. If you do bring children with you, instruct children to be quiet, respectful, and to keep the following in mind:

- Do not try to pet or lift a dog unless invited to do so by the breeder.
- Approach any dog with care, being careful not to startle them. If a child is not comfortable, do not force them to approach/touch a dog as they may scream and run away which is harmful to young puppies.
- Do not chase a dog or reach down and grab a dog.

Good Luck with your journey to find the perfect new member of your family.