



The RIGHT Way to Bring a Dog into Your Life Marj Green-Beyer, Gemstone Airedales

So you've decided to get a dog. Anyone looking for a dog needs to understand that a relationship with a dog is like getting married. You need to be attracted to them inside and out. We are all drawn to the looks of a particular type of dog, but their personality must also match our lifestyle every day for the next 10 to 20 years. So, you've evaluated your lifestyle and know exactly what sort of dog you're looking for (e.g., a high energy dog to go running with you or a more sedate dog to lounge on the couch with you). Now you need to realize that you need to seek desired characteristics in a breeder's *individual* dogs, not just a breed, because breed is no guarantee of temperament or personality.

You have checked the shelters and rescue groups, but still have not found the right dog for you, and you know better than to buy a puppy from a pet store or over the Internet because most of those puppies come from mass breeding facilities better known as *puppy mills*.

So you've decided to buy a dog from a breeder—but you don't want to support someone who doesn't have the dogs' best interests in mind.

How do you identify a good breeder?

First, know that good breeders don't breed to make money—we don't sell our puppies to the first person who shows up with cash in hand. Too often, people opt for convenience and quick purchase and buy a puppy because it was easy.

Buying a dog directly from a good breeder is a pleasure.

A good breeder minimally:

- Keeps dogs in the home as part of the family or has a clean, well kept facility —*not* outside
- Only breeds one or two types of dogs and is knowledgeable about what are called “breed standards” (the desired characteristics of the breed, such as size, proportion, coat, color, and temperament)
- Doesn't always have puppies available but rather will keep a list of interested people for the next available litter
- Has dogs who appear happy and healthy and don't shy away from visitors
- Shows you where the dogs spend their time—in a clean, well-maintained area
- Encourages you to spend time with the puppy's parents—at a minimum, the pup's mother—when you visit. A good breeder has a quality female that can be bred to a high quality male from another good breeder.
- Has a strong relationship with a local veterinarian
- Explains in detail the potential genetic problems inherent in the breed (every breed has specific genetic predispositions) and provides documentation that the puppy's parents and grandparents have been tested to ensure that they are free of these genetic problems. A good breeder will tell you of any genetic problems they have encountered in their line. If they say they have never had a problem...chances are they are lying.
- Offers guidance for caring for and training your puppy and is available for assistance at any time after you take your puppy home
- Provides references from other families who have purchased puppies
- Feeds high quality “premium” brand pet food

- Is actively involved with local, state, or national clubs that specialize in the specific breed; good breeders should also compete the 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
- Encourages multiple visits and requires your entire family to meet the puppy before taking money. A good breeder WILL NOT ship a puppy without meeting you and your family.
- 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
- Provides a pedigree showing your puppy’s parentage and genetic history

In addition to those criteria, you’ll want a breeder who requires some things of *you*, too. The breeder should require you to (either on an application and/or over the phone):

- Explain why you want a dog
- Explain who in your family will be responsible for the pup’s daily care, who will attend training classes, where the dog will spend most of his or her time, and what “rules” have been decided upon for the puppy— for example, whether or not the dog will be allowed on furniture
- Provide proof from your landlord or condominium board (if you rent or live in a condominium complex) that you are allowed to have a dog
- Provide a veterinary reference
- 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

Remember, a reputable breeder will *never* sell dogs through a pet store or in any other way that doesn’t allow interaction with buyers to ensure that the puppies are a good match for the families and that the buyers will provide responsible lifelong homes.

Please don’t ever buy a dog without personally visiting where he or she was born and raised. Take the time now to find the right breeder, and you’ll be thanking yourself for the rest of your dog’s life.

THE PUREBRED BREEDER COMMUNITY

Purebred dog fanciers become breeders because we love dogs, appreciate the qualities of a particular breed or two, and enjoy working with other people who love dogs. That’s why we network with other breeders and pet owners on breed-related activities. That’s why we compete in dog shows and sports to prove that their dogs conform to the highest breed standards and have the structure and willingness necessary to perform. That’s why we share our knowledge and understanding of dogs with puppy buyers and through clubs and local events.

The bottom line is simple. For us, raising the best dogs is a passion, a privilege, a labor of love, and a lifelong commitment. You can reap the benefits of this devotion when you select one of our puppies.

FINDING A PUREBRED PUPPY

If you know where to look, purebred puppies and the caring people who breed them should be easy to find.

Here are some tips to steer you in the right direction:

- Ask a veterinarian for a referral
- Search the Internet for breed *clubs* near you – NOT *breeders* near you
- Attend a dog show
- Ask local dog groomers, boarding facilities or other pet service providers