

How To Sniff Out A Good Dog Breeder



ASPCA[®]

Congratulations! You've decided to add a dog to your family. There are many wonderful puppies and dogs looking for new homes in shelters and rescue groups across the country, and we always encourage people to adopt one of these awesome and deserving pups. But if you absolutely can't find the right adoptable dog for yourself and your family, we want to help you choose a breeder who loves and cares for their dogs, and who gave your future puppy the best start possible.

Finding a good breeder takes work, time and energy. But trust us—it's worth it. Here are some tips to put you on the right track to taking home a puppy (and help you avoid being tricked by one of the bad guys).

Meet The Family

It is really important that you visit the puppy in the place where he or she was born. That means you should also expect to meet mom and other puppies and dad if he is around. Meeting more family members tells you more about your puppy.

- ✘ Cruel breeders will often try to hide the poor conditions where they breed dogs. If the breeder is reluctant for you to visit, refuses to show you the puppies' parents and where they live, refuses to let you see the puppies up close and handle them, or wants you to meet the puppy in another place (even if it's more convenient for you), find another breeder!

Yes, the Internet is amazing! You can learn tons and puppy pics are super cute but Internet shopping is for shoes, not puppies. While there might be a good breeder here or there who uses the Internet to advertise, there are simply too many bad ones who dress up a nasty situation with pretty bows, and even the savviest of us can get fooled. So if you see a dog you love online, you still need to make the trip. Otherwise, you're taking a big risk.



The Good Life

So you've made the trip. How does it look? Are you impressed with the living conditions and how the dogs and puppies are treated? Do the dogs have access to nutritious food and clean water? Are young puppies kept with their mothers for at least 8 weeks before sale?

Healthy, well-socialized puppies come from healthy, well-socialized parent dogs. A good breeder will only breed friendly adult dogs, and he or she will also take steps to make sure the puppies are well-socialized. Watch how the puppies and the adult dogs behave—are they eager to interact with you and friendly with other dogs? Do they seem confident? If they seem nervous or fearful or if they avoid you when you try to pet or play with them, look elsewhere.

Different breeds are predisposed to different inherited disorders and diseases. A good breeder will be aware of, and screen for, any known problems that may be specific to the breed. They will be able to show you copies of veterinary reports and screening tests to confirm this.

Ask the breeder what they think are the most important characteristics in their puppies. A good breeder will put health, welfare and friendly behavior above appearance.

How many different breeds of dogs do you see? It shouldn't look like a pet store. Good breeders usually commit to a specific breed because they want to be experts on the health and behavior of the breed.

Just like humans, dogs need healthcare. Good breeders will make sure all of their dogs have regular veterinary health checks, and are vaccinated and treated when they are sick or injured. Ask about the veterinary care routine for the puppies and the puppies' parents. Ask about the frequency of health checks, worming and vaccinations and what documents will come home with your puppy. Ask to see the records.

Bottom line: *Would you want your dog living there?*

Must Love Dogs

Good breeders want the best for all their animals, from new puppies, to the moms they breed, to senior dogs.

A good breeder plans each litter and is devoted to caring for each puppy until a home can be found. Because of this careful planning, good breeders may not always have a litter available. (Don't be turned off by waiting lists—in fact, they're likely a good sign.)

Like you, we love dogs.

But too many dogs live a life without love – bred for profit and kept in tiny cages, all to keep the puppy industry in business. These dogs don't receive any affection, exercise or proper veterinary care. And when they can't produce puppies, they are discarded.

Cruel breeders, pet stores and others who make money off this business know you don't think dogs should live this way, so they rely on deception and pull on your heartstrings. Don't let them get away with it. By adopting or visiting responsible breeders, you can help put an end to these cruel practices.



Does this breeder have homes lined up for the puppies? If not, how does the breeder plan on placing them?

Even after a puppy leaves their home, good breeders will serve as a resource for the new family, helping with any questions and health or behavior issues that may arise. Good breeders stand by every dog they sell. Their goal is that you and your puppy have long, happy lives together.

But what if you take the puppy home and it's not a good fit, or something unexpected happens down the road? What would the breeder do? Good breeders are committed to the dogs they sell for their lifetime. Make sure whatever you and the breeder agree to is put in writing.

Ask the breeder what happens to the breeding dogs as they age, when they're done having litters. Are they kept as pets or placed in a loving home?

Bottom line: *To a good breeder, dogs are pets. So when a mother dog stops having puppies, she's still loved and cared for.*

No Such Thing As TMI



Good breeders want to make sure you are well-informed and will readily provide you with information about the dog breed generally, the specific dogs they bred, and the puppy you are interested in. Things like size, behavior, and health issues should all be covered. A good breeder should provide advice on spay and neutering. Not only are good breeders knowledgeable, they're also transparent. Ask to take a look at health records, photos of prior litters, and any other information you or the breeder thinks will be helpful.

✘ A breeder who is unwilling or unable to answer basic questions probably has something to hide.

A good breeder will also ask you questions to make sure this is the right puppy for you and help you to prepare your home and family for your new puppy. For example, they may ask if you have children or other animals in the household, or how much and what type of exercise you expect to provide, and discuss any grooming you need to take on.

If you like what you hear and you're ready to take the next step, talk to people who have worked with the breeder before. Good breeders will readily provide references, both from families they've placed puppies with and from their vet. If you hear anything concerning—either from the references or elsewhere—make sure you're comfortable with breeder's explanation or consider finding a new one.

Bottom Line: *The puppy is cute and you are smitten, but is it a match? Both you and the breeder should decide together.*

Go With Your Gut



Take time to review everything and discuss any concerns with your family, friends, veterinarian, or anyone else you trust. Be honest with yourself. If you're at all uncomfortable with what you are told or feel pressured to make a quick decision, you might want to consider other options: another breed or mixed-breed, or even an older dog instead of a puppy. Did we mention adoption?

Good luck, and remember to send us a pic!

Checklist: How To Sniff Out A Good Dog Breeder

Home Life

- Does the breeder openly invite you to visit where the dogs are born and raised?
- Are the puppies with their mother?
- Does the breeder make the puppies' dad and other relatives available to you?
- Are you able to see the dogs up close and handle them?
- Are you impressed with the living conditions and how the dogs and puppies are treated?
- Is the puppies' area clean, comfortable and safe?
- Do the dogs have plenty of room to move around and play, both indoors and outdoors?
- Does the breeder treat the puppies as part of the family?

Health and Behavior

- Are there toys for both the puppies and the puppies' parents to enjoy?
- Do the dogs have access to clean, nutritious food and water?
- Are the puppies friendly and eager to socialize with you and other dogs? Have they interacted with other people and children?
- Does the breeder talk about genetic screening tests?
- Is there a regular veterinary care routine (health checks, worming, vaccinations) for the puppies and the puppies' parents?
- Does the breeder talk to you about spay and neutering?

Planning and Commitment

- Does the breeder seem to specialize in one breed?
- Does this breeder have homes lined up for the puppies? Or can they share how they plan on placing their puppies?
- Will the breeder be there for you even after you take your dog home or in the unlikely event that you can't keep your puppy?
- Is the breeder willing to put what you agree to in writing?
- Are older dogs, who are done having litters, kept as pets or placed in a loving home?

Information Sharing

- Does the breeder readily provide you with information about the breed in general, the specific dogs they breed, and the puppy you are interested in?
- Are you able to look at health records, genetic screening tests, photos of prior litters, and any other helpful information?
- Does the breeder readily provide references?
- Does the breeder ask *you* questions to make sure this puppy is right for you and to help you prepare your home and family?