



### Questions to Ask The Breeder

- 1) Where did you find out about this breeder? Responsible breeders will breed only when they have a waiting list of puppy buyers. They don't ever find it necessary to advertise in newspapers, websites such as Craig's List, or with a sign out in the front yard.
- 2) Do both the sire and dam have CHIC (Canine Health Information Center) numbers? A CHIC number requires minimum health screenings: hip, elbow, eye, and heart.
  - a. Do both parents (the sire and dam) have either good or excellent hip clearances from the OFA (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals)? Ask to see the certificates. "My vet okayed the hips/x-ray" is not a valid clearance.
  - b. Do both parents have normal OFA Elbow readings? OFA Elbow screening evaluates for elbow dysplasia such as ununited anconeal process, fragmented coronoid process, osteochondrosis, or any combination thereof.
  - c. Do both parents have current eye clearances from CAER (Companion Animal Eye Registry)? CAER examinations screen for heritable eye diseases and should be completed yearly until after the dog's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- 3) Are both parents at least 2 years old? Final OFA hip and elbow clearances cannot be obtained before that age. Be suspicious of dogs bred before all health clearances can be completed and before the dog's temperament as an adult is known. A scrupulous breeder is not in a hurry to breed, but takes time to evaluate their bitch's strengths and weaknesses as well as to choose an appropriate sire.
- 4) Do all four grandparents, siblings of the parents and any other puppies they may have produced have hip, elbow, CAER (eye), and heart/eye diseases? A responsible breeder will keep track of these statistics and openly discuss any problems that have occurred in the lines and what has been done to prevent them from reoccurring.
- 5) How often is the dam bred? If the dam is bred on consecutive estrus cycles and the breeder can give you an educated explanation for this, you needn't be as skeptical of this breeder; however, if no "good" explanation can be given, it may indicate that profit is the primary motive for the frequency of breeding.
- 6) Is the breeder willing to provide you with references and telephone numbers of other people who have purchased puppies from them?
- 7) Do all puppies placed as pets registered with limited AKC registration and required to be spayed/neutered? A breeder who cares enough about the breed to insist on these is likely to be a responsible breeder.
- 8) On what basis was the sire chosen? If the answer is "because he lives right down the street" or "because he is really sweet," sufficient thought was not put into the

breeding. Responsible breeding is based on structurally improving the breed, producing healthy puppies, and the pedigree research to support that.

- 9) **WILL THE BREEDER TAKE THE DOG BACK AT ANY TIME, FOR ANY REASON, IF YOU CANNOT KEEP IT?!** This is the hallmark of responsible breeding (and the quickest way to make rescue obsolete).
- 10) Will the breeder be available to answer any question you might have for the life of the dog? Is this someone you would feel comfortable asking any type of question at any hour of the day or night?
- 11) Is the breeder knowledgeable about the breed? Is he or she involved in competition with their dogs (agility, rally, obedience, and/or conformation)? And for how many years have they been involved with the breed?
- 12) Are there a majority of titled dogs (the initials: CH, OTCH/RACH, CD/CDX, RN/RI/RA, CGC, etc.- before and after the names) in the first three generations of ALL their breeding animals? (The term 'champion lines' means nothing if those titles are back three, four, or more generations or there is only one or two in the whole pedigree.)
- 13) Are the sire and dam available for you to meet? If the sire is unavailable, can you call his owners or people who have other of his offspring to ask about temperament or health problems? (You should be able to request at any time and certainly, be provided at the time of purchase: pictures or videos, a three or more generation pedigree, and health certification numbers of both the sire and dam.)
- 14) Have the puppies been raised in the *home* - not in a barn, kennel, the basement, garage, or the backyard?
- 15) Is the breeder knowledgeable about raising puppies, critical neonatal periods, proper socialization techniques, etc.? Puppies that are raised without ample exposure to gentle handling, human contact and a wide variety of noises and experiences OR are removed from their dam before she is ready (usually between 6 and 8 weeks of age) or removed from their littermates before 10 to 12 weeks, may exhibit a wide variety of behavioral problems!
- 16) Does the breeder provide you with registration papers, a contract to sign, copies of all clearances and guarantees, health records and material to help you with feeding, socializing, training and housebreaking AT the time of sale?
- 17) Have the puppies' temperaments been evaluated and can the breeder guide you to the puppy that will best suit your lifestyle? A very shy puppy will not do well in a noisy household with small children, just as a very dominant puppy won't flourish in a sedate, senior citizen household. A caring breeder will know the puppies and be able to guide you towards the puppy that will best fit your family and lifestyle.
- 18) Do the puppies seem healthy, with no discharge from eyes or nose, no loose stools, no foul smelling ears? Are their coats soft and clean? Do they have plenty of energy when awake? Are their nails trimmed (preferably with dewclaws removed and the incision sites well healed by the time you visit with them)?
- 19) Are the puppies current and up-to-date with their vaccine series and vet checked? (When a puppy is placed at an ideal 10 to 12 weeks of age, they should have 2 vaccinations on board; over 12 weeks, 3 vaccines; and over 16 weeks, 4 vaccines and their puppy series should be complete except for their Rabies vaccine which needs to be administered by your veterinarian and then registered with your county before 6 months of age.) No puppy from a good, clean environment should ever have worms or external parasites (fleas, ticks, ear mites, etc.). Even if a puppy is not sent home

with any of these problems, did the breeder need to treat the puppies for any of these issues? If so, things may not be as clean or healthy as you think!

- 20) Does the breeder have only 1 or at most 2 breeds of dogs and only 1 litter at a time? If there are several breeds of dogs, chances are the breeder cannot devote the time it takes to become extremely knowledgeable about the breed; and if there is more than one litter at a time it is very difficult to give the puppies the attention they need and may indicate that the primary purpose for breeding is profit, rather than a sincere desire to improve the breed.
- 21) Does the breeder belong to their breed's parent club or a regional breed club? You can check the PWDCA (Portuguese Water Dog Club of America; [www.pwdca.org](http://www.pwdca.org)) for breeders on their Breeder Referral List. These are breeders dedicated to completing health testing and producing sound dogs.
- 22) Do you feel comfortable with this person? After all, you are entering into a decade (plus) long relationship. If after talking to a breeder you feel intimidated or pressured...keep looking!