

Essential questions to ask a breeder



- 1. How long have you been breeding dogs?**
 - The more experience and involvement in breed clubs, shows and competitions, the better.
 - Beware of breeders who breed dogs of more than one or two breeds.

- 2. How many litters have you bred?**
 - Experience here is a very good thing too, though more than 4-5 litters per year would be a warning sign.
 - If they are new to breeding, they should talk about their mentor(s) who have helped them establish a breeding program.

- 3. Will the puppies be registered with the Canadian or American Kennel Club?**
 - This establishes the puppy's status as a purebred. In Canada puppies are most commonly registered with the Canadian Kennel Club. Other registries also recognized by the Animal Pedigree Act are the Canine Federation of Canada, Canadian Border Collie Association, and Working Canine Association of Canada. Beware of bogus registries that are not recognized by the Animal Pedigree Act.
 - If you are traveling to visit a breeder in the U.S., they should register their puppies with the American Kennel Club.
 - It is the breeder's responsibility to forward the certificate within 6 months of the sale to the new owner; they are not allowed to charge an additional fee for this service. The certificate includes the dog's registered name, breed and date of birth, as well as the names of the dog's sire and dam.

- 4. Can I see where the puppies and dam(s) are being housed?**
 - The best way to raise a puppy is in a home environment so it will get lots of handling and human contact.
 - Facilities should be clean and spacious.

- 5. Are the puppies raised in your home from birth?**
 - Puppies should be raised in the home from birth.
 - They should be kept clean, warm, well fed, and with their mother until they are weaned.

- 6. Were the sire and dam screened for genetic disorders common to this breed?**
 - Good breeders have all their breeding stock screened for relevant genetic disorders, and remove affected animals from their breeding programs. Affected animals are spayed/neutered and may be placed as companion animals as long as health issues are disclosed to buyers/adopters.
 - The breeder should include copies of the genetic screening results in the papers given to buyers.

- 7. What were your goals for this litter?**
 - A good breeder has clear goals when selecting the sire and dam. If the goal is to produce working dogs and both the sire and dam are high drive dogs, it might not be

the best choice for someone seeking a nice, calm companion. However, it would be perfect for someone looking for a hunting companion.

- There will be a variety of temperaments in every litter and the breeder should speak knowledgeably about temperaments in her dogs and puppies.
- Good breeders will talk openly about their breeding program and breeding practices.

8. When do you start breeding a dam, and when is she retired?

- The breeder should not be breeding dogs that are younger than 18 months, and should stop breeding them by middle age, which will vary depending on the breed.
- They should stop breeding any female dog once it has delivered 3 to 4 litters if it's a large breed, or 5 to 6 litters if it's a small breed.

9. Is the dam current on her vaccines?

- If the vaccines are not up to date, the puppies' ability to resist disease will be compromised.
- The breeder should include copies of vaccination certificates in the papers given to the buyer.

10. At what age will the puppies be ready to leave?

- Puppies should not go to their new homes before 8 weeks old. Any earlier and they may have issues with other dogs in the future; any longer than 10 weeks and they may not bond as well with people.

11. Have the puppies been seen by a vet?

- Puppies need to be dewormed and vaccinated before leaving the breeder. (You will also need to follow up with your own veterinarian so the puppy gets boosters at appropriate intervals and the risk of it contracting a life-threatening illness is lessened.)

12. What kind of guarantee do you offer?

- A good breeder will offer a detailed health guarantee that specifically addresses genetic disorders and offers more than just a replacement puppy.
- Beware of a breeder that requires you to return the puppy in order to get a refund or replacement.

13. Will you be able to help me with care and training issues once I get my puppy home?

- Good breeders want to stay in touch and help their puppy buyers with any health, training, or minor behavioural issues.
- The breeder should also ask *you* questions to ensure your lifestyle, knowledge of dogs and attitude are a good fit for one of their puppies.

14. Can you provide some references?