



Are You A Breeder or Do You Just Breed Dogs?

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Written by Ms Dany Canino

Every year thousands of dogs are put to sleep at animal shelters all over the country. Where did these dogs come from? Can we honestly put the entire blame on the puppy mills or the casual backyard breeder? Or, could it possibly be that many of these unfortunate dogs are the result of progeny produced by "professional breeders"?

Anyone can breed dogs, but it takes someone very special to wear the badge of a breeder.

A good breeder will keep track of the progeny they produce; including the pet/non breeding stock. A good breeder will make sure that the pet progeny produced is sold on a spay/neuter contract and will follow through to see that this has been done. Now of days a breeder can utilize the AKC's "Limited Registration" option to re-evaluate a dog at one year of age to see if the quality of the dog warrants a "breedable" registration. Also available is the fact that you can render an animal sterile as young as 9 weeks of age. The American Veterinary Association has determined (after many years of study) that this young age is ideal because the animal has less bleeding and heals faster. It's amazing to me that very few vets even mention this to you.

If, as a breeder you only concern yourself with the show quality animals you've sold, then you could be setting yourself and your breeding stock up for suspicion as to why you are breeding in the first place. As breeders (we) are all hoping that the pups we produce will end up being a "show dog". However, we always have to admit that we always also produce some pets in each

litter and, we need to bear in mind that those pet puppies we sold helped to pay our litter expenses. Those pets that were sold could end up being responsible for pet shop puppies. Whereas, I personally feel the sole responsibility lies with the breeder that sold the pet either without a spay/neuter contract or without following through that sterility was accomplished. It never ceases to amaze me how many dogs that end up in some shelter or a rescue organization is the second generation progeny of some recognized breeder.

I'm also amazed at how many breeders sell progeny of both show and pet potential without the aid of a contract. A contract is an insurance policy for both the breeder and the buyer. A contract is one of the things that separates us from the puppy mills or the backyard breeder that we all profess to abhor. A contract says that we are willing to stand behind what we produce and that we care about the future of the animals we've brought into the world.

A properly worded contract is a breeder's guarantee that the dog sold is going to receive the best of care, not be bred too young, or not at all, receive proper socialization, be trained, and most importantly guarantee the breeder of a "first right of refusal" if the buyer is unable to keep this dog.

To some, my suggestions for a contract may seem a bit rigid, but it has never lost me a sale of a puppy. In fact, my puppy buyers end up respecting the fact that I'm looking out for the best interest of the puppy and the breed

too. I can honestly say that in the 30 years of breeding I've only had two puppies returned to me as per my contract. One was due to a divorce situation and the dog was 8 years old and the other was because the dog wasn't being properly cared for and my contract enabled me to legally repossess the dog if this situation occurred.

My contracts have always stated that the buyer is obligated to let me know if they are going to move from the address I have on them. One of my biggest thrills was getting a call from a buyer of one of my dogs notifying me that they were moving to Texas. The dog they had purchased from me was 13 ½ years old.

There are certain components you must have in a contract to make sure it will stand up in a court of law should that become necessary. You must:

- Be sure that the contract is fair (50/50) to all parties signing.
- Be sure that you clearly state that all parties signing are aware of, and agree to the contents of the contract.
- Be sure that it is stated there are no verbal or other promises or guarantees promised. Only those in writing and duly signed by all parties will be honored.
- Be sure it states in the contract that if it becomes necessary to litigate a violation of the contract, that if you are the prevailing litigant, you have the right to be reimbursed for all legal costs and, have the right to redeem the dog with all AKC papers properly signed over to you.

Contracts are indeed breed specific. When I was breeding Rottweilers I was adamant that the dog had to be trained through open obedience before it could enter into any training for bite work.

Obviously this situation would not be necessary for a Golden Retriever, but you might want to make sure the buyers agree to have the dog's eyes checked yearly.

I am appalled at how many "breeders" give a buyer a pedigree that would take an expert to piece together; i.e., the sire's side on one piece of paper, the dam's on another, and the other generations are piece work at best. I've known of some sales where no pedigree was given. The "breeder" simply suggests that the buyer write to AKC for a full pedigree.

I've had new puppy owners contact me for a good feeding schedule, food suggestions, housebreaking tips and so forth and so forth. All things that should have been related to the buyer before or when they pick up their puppy. They should also be given a two day supply of food. These are only a few things, there are many other situations of unanswered questions I've received from puppy buyers that bought from a "breeder".

I've had people enroll in my training classes with 5 to 11 month old dogs that have not only not had any contact with their breeders since they bought their dog, but they can't even remember the breeder's name. Of course I'm referring to the pet puppy buyer since it seems that the show puppy buyer is in constant touch with the breeder. Now I grant you that the pendulum swings both ways. The puppy buyer should stay in touch with the breeder, but they really need to be told (over and over again) that you want to hear from them.

The thing that I find astounding is that a breeder wouldn't want to stay in touch with each and every puppy so that the breeder can see how their breeding program is working.

I don't think a breeder's responsibility ends with the placing of their pups. It should continue through the dog's adulthood. I'm not inferring that the buyer has no responsibilities when it comes to this dog, but I do feel it's up to the breeder to educate the buyer of their responsibility when it comes to this dog, and then to follow through to see if the buyer has met these responsibilities.

I sincerely hope that any breeder selling puppies has an all inclusive interview with the potential buyer and their family before deciding to sell them a pup. It's also a good idea to investigate the buyers home to make sure it is safe for a new puppy and that this puppy will definitely be allowed in the home. If the pup is going to a home where there are small children, you need to make sure that the adult buyers know how to safeguard both the puppy and the child.

I'm not sure how the scales balance as far as how many breeders follow through with all the progeny they produce, and/or the breeder that only follows up on the show quality pups sold. However, I hope that the scales tip with the former.

As a judge I find it incredible that I have had to withhold ribbons on dogs for a "lack of merit". This shouldn't have to happen. I grant you that some of these dogs are the direct result of the "backyard breeder", but when I check the catalogue I oftentimes discover that this dog was bred and sold by a well known breeder. How then did this dog end up in a show ring? I feel it was the breeder's responsibility to evaluate this dog if the buyers decided to show it. I don't look bad as the judge. The buyers don't look bad as an exhibitor. The only one that looks bad is the person that bred and sold this dog.

If you want a real education start looking through your local newspaper to see all the ads for puppies of your breed at a much reduced price than compared to what you are asking. You need to offer more for what you want a buyer to pay. If you can show a potential buyer that you do things in a more professional manner it makes the buyer feel more comfortable dealing with the professional. It makes them feel more comfortable when you can show them (via pictures, website or other means) background on this puppy and, can offer them a guarantee on various things with this puppy.

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Which came first the puppy mill or the breeder? The people that operate a puppy mill had to get their original breeding stock from somewhere. It's pretty frightening when you actually trace a pedigree back five or six generations and see those well known dogs of the past. I say, "don't let history repeat itself." We can't cast stones if we live in glass kennels!

If we don't become beyond reproach in our own placements of our puppies and this includes the follow up after the sale, we will soon discover that we won't be able to breed anymore. Laws are being written all over the United States to try and stop us from this healthy, happy, and sometimes very rewarding, satisfying hobby. If we don't breed with integrity, responsibility and a true concern for the progeny we produce, we will eventually have no one to blame for the outcome of breeding, than ourselves.