

Finding an Accountable Breeder

By CKC

Adding a new puppy to your family can be very exciting but deciding on what breed best suits you and your family is only part of the process. Just as much time should be spent on selecting your breeder, the person who will not only bring your puppy into this world and provide first-rate care for the first several months of your puppy's life, but who will also be part of your puppy-raising support team for many years to come.

To start your search, contact the [National Breed Club](#) for your selected breed for referrals to breeders in your local area.

Following the tips below, you may also visit the [CKC Puppy List](#) to search for available puppies from CKC Member Breeders by breed and province.

The process of choosing an accountable breeder who will be a good fit for you and your family, can seem challenging, so we've compiled a list of key tips to help you find the right breeder. **View the Infographic for Finding an Accountable Breeder** [here](#).

Research if the breeder is active in their canine communities

Most accountable breeders are entrenched in activities revolving around their dogs and their breeds, demonstrating how passionate they are. They belong to their national and regional breed and performance clubs and often clubs outside of Canada. These clubs are established to preserve, protect and showcase their breeds and breeders want to support these efforts. Dedicated breeders also compete with their dogs in conformation and performance events, including obedience, agility, lure coursing and many more fun and exciting events. Depending on the breed's original purpose, your breeder may train and work their dogs in activities such as hunting, herding, scent detection and tracking.

Membership in CKC and national breed clubs is important because it demonstrates the breeder's commitment to following best practices as set out by the clubs. CKC, for example, is a national, member-based non-profit organization, incorporated under the Animal Pedigree Act of Canada, providing registry services for purebred dogs. Members of CKC must adhere to bylaws, policies & procedures, a Code of Ethics as well as a Code of Practice for breeders, all of which detail standards of care when it comes to raising, breeding and selling dogs. Membership also ensures that both parents and the puppies are registered with CKC. Canadian law requires that any breeder selling a dog as a purebred must register the dog with a registry body incorporated under the Animal Pedigree Act, such as CKC, and provide the new owner with the registration certificate within six months of the date of sale unless contractually delayed based on the timing of spaying or neutering the dog. It is the responsibility of the breeder to complete all paperwork required and pay for the registration.

The breeder should be committed to educating and supporting their puppy families

Breeders have extensive knowledge about their breeds and their wisdom can be extremely helpful to their puppy families. Accountable breeders take the time to support their puppy families with guidance on breed-specific requirements related to health, grooming, instinctive behaviors and temperament. They should offer advice on training and care of your puppy after

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you take your puppy home, and for the rest of your puppy's life. Don't be afraid to ask for references from other families who currently own a dog they bred to confirm the breeder's involvement.

Ask the breeder if they perform health and genetic testing on their breeding dogs

One of a breeder's primary goals should be to breed healthy, balanced and sound puppies. One of the ways to achieve this is through health and genetic testing. An accountable breeder will ensure their dogs are tested by veterinary specialists to reduce and/or eliminate the possibility of passing on inherited health issues to the next generation. Most breeds have a national club that has a list of health tests that are recommended for their breed and expect their breeder members to carry out such testing on their dogs. Ask to see the results of health tests for both the dam and the sire of your potential puppy's litter, as well as for previous generations.

Ask the breeder if your puppy will be checked by a veterinarian and microchipped before they are sent home

At a minimum, your puppy should come home with their first set of vaccinations, vet records and a unique identifier such as a microchip.

Prior to sending puppies home with their new families, accountable breeders have their puppies seen by a veterinarian for a health check-up and their first vaccinations. Your puppy's veterinary records should be provided to you by your breeder, with a detailed schedule for future vet visits and vaccinations. At a minimum, your puppy should come home with their first set of vaccinations, vet records and a unique identifier such as a microchip.

In Canada, the law requires that all purebred dogs must be permanently and uniquely identified before leaving the breeder's premises to go to their new home. This most commonly occurs in the form of a microchip, such as the [National Companion Animal Coalition-recognized microchips](#) offered by the Canadian Kennel Club. It is the responsibility of the breeder to pay for this identification and provide you with the microchip number of your new puppy.

Schedule a visit with the breeder and puppies before you purchase your puppy

An accountable breeder welcomes prospective puppy owners to visit them and their kennels, and will want to get to know you, your family, and your lifestyle. Don't be surprised though if your first visit occurs outside of the breeder's home/kennel. Due to health and safety concerns, some breeders may choose to get to know you better in a neutral location like a park or coffee shop before they invite you into their home. If you live far away, they may even arrange to have a puppy buyer alumnus in your area meet you so that you can get to know the breeder and the dogs they produce.

If you are invited to the breeder's home or kennel facilities to meet their dogs and age permitting, their puppies, your visit may occur once puppies are born or often months before.

Finding an Accountable Breeder

By CKC

Many breeders do not allow visitors for a period of time after puppies are born so don't expect to meet newborn puppies—they need enough time for their immune systems to develop before receiving visitors. After the waiting period, you'll be able to meet the puppies and their mom, who should play a major role in rearing her puppies until their new families take over. The puppies' father won't always be available for the visit as breeders quite often breed to stud dogs owned by other breeders, so don't be too disappointed if he isn't.

Whether in the breeder's home or in a kennel, the space should be clean with adequate room for the dogs, puppies and people. Dogs should appear healthy and well-cared for and not exhibit signs of fear or aggression.

Understand the breeder's application and selling process

When discussing purchasing a puppy from an accountable breeder you should expect a thorough evaluation process. This may involve a series of steps including filling out an application, email exchanges, Skype and phone conversations, an in-person visit and a reference check. While you're going to have lots of questions for prospective breeders, you can also expect a lot of questions. An accountable breeder cares deeply about where and with whom their dogs will live for the rest of their lives and their questions help them get to know you and your family as well as your lifestyle so they can thoroughly confirm the fit.

A contract outlining your rights and responsibilities as a dog owner is an important detail that shouldn't be skipped by a breeder. It should include provisions should your puppy experience health issues and instructions in the event you are unable to keep your puppy. For example, accountable breeders require their dogs come home to them if their owners are unable to care for their dog at any point in the dog's life, regardless of age. A contract should also come with a bill of sale detailing the total price of your puppy and a schedule for time-limited refunds if offered

Be Prepared to Wait

Do you want your puppy to join your family immediately? The likelihood of that happening is pretty low. Most accountable breeders have waiting lists so you may be required to wait several months or a year or more to bring home a puppy. It's better to find the right breeder for you and wait for your puppy than to rush and end up in a situation that isn't ideal for you or your puppy. Take advantage of the waiting period and learn as much about your breed as you can. Get ready for the day your puppy joins your family by puppy-proofing your home, researching activities you'd like to get involved with, finding a training school, going to dog events, joining a performance club such as an obedience or agility club and interviewing prospective veterinarians.

Finding an Accountable Breeder

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Double Check Your Sources

Adding a new member to your family can be an exciting and patience-trying experience, but don't let your anticipation of your new arrival let you forget that not all individuals selling dogs or puppies are accountable, reputable breeders.

Unfortunately, as more breeders start to use technology to showcase their kennels and dogs, scammers and identity thieves can sometimes access this information and use it nefariously.

Common signs that might indicate your puppy is not coming from an accountable breeder include:

- The seller doesn't have an up-to-date website, Facebook page, profile, or other publicly available source of information about themselves and/or their kennel
- The seller will not provide a documented receipt, including their full name, contact details, and address, for proof of deposit or purchase
- The price of the puppies seems "too good to be true"
- The advertisement uses terms like "rare" and/or the price of puppies varies depending on genetic characteristics like coat colour or type, eye colour or body size
- You aren't allowed to pick up your own puppy to bring home, but instead must use a "courier" or "pet delivery service" to transport them but the seller won't specify the company they will use
- The seller only accepts payment through services like Western Union or MoneyGram
- The price of transportation for puppies coming from out of country is exceptionally low OR the seller claims to have unexpected extra costs arise