

# How to Find and Identify A Reputable Breeder

By Top Dog Tips

We believe in adopting shelter dogs, but some families prefer to purchase their puppies from breeders. In these circumstances, it's important to support a reputable breeder and avoid funding places that exploit dogs.

But how to find a reputable breeder and identify which operations are legit while avoiding puppy scams?



There are three types of dog breeders you may run into

- **A reputable breeder**
- **A puppy mill (disreputable breeder)**
- **A backyard breeder**

The differences between the three are major.

Two other dog breeders can often lump into one of the above three categories: **commercial breeders** (similar to puppy mills) and **hobby breeders** (similar to a backyard breeder, but occasionally have better practices).

In your quest to find a responsible dog breeder, you'll need to take a few proven steps in actually locating them and then vetting the breeder to ensure that it's genuinely reputable to avoid becoming a victim like so many others.

Below is everything you must know about the types of dog breeders, tell-tale signs of illegitimate breeders, and tips on how to find a reputable dog breeder in your area.

## How to Find a Reputable Dog Breeder



### The Definition of a Reputable Dog Breeder

A reputable dog breeder is a breeder that is concerned with the **betterment of a breed**.

Their breeding seasons are meticulously planned to match genetically superior female dogs and male dogs to give birth to healthy puppies with the desired traits of their breed.

This ensures that what makes a breed distinct is maintained and perfected over time.

To find a *reputable* dog breeder, one must first understand what makes a breeder *disreputable*.

A few types of breeders are out there, and it's important to know the specific differences and how a responsible breeder differs from these other types.

Below are the three types of dog breeders future pet buyers will encounter.



## 1. The Reputable Breeder

The reputable breeder focuses their efforts on the **health and development of a breed**.

Often a litter of puppies will cost a reputable breeder more than they will make back by selling their puppies.

This is due to the cost of breeding, the cost of care, medical screening, medical care, premium nutrition, and the maintenance of raising healthy dogs.

Responsible breeders sell puppies at high prices to cover their legit breeding costs and **screen dog buyers** to ensure they can afford appropriate care for their new puppy.

These breeders also require a **purchase contract** with a spay and neuter clause, a health guarantee, and an agreement to return the puppy to the breeder should the new owner ever be unable to care for them.

The bottom line is that buying a dog from a reputable breeder is far more complex and expensive than it would be from a puppy mill or a backyard breeder.

## **2. The Puppy Mill Breeder**

The puppy mill breeder is focused on the **mass production of puppies for profit**.

These breeders often keep their dogs in unsanitary and inhumane conditions to decrease costs and provide very little veterinary care.

These breeders make a significant profit by breeding their dogs to the max and selling puppies for high prices despite their poor health.

Puppy mill breeders are often **willing to haggle on the price** of their puppies to lock in a sale (while reputable breeders do not negotiate on prices).

Puppy mills are extremely lax in screening buyers of their puppies, and they may or may not include a sale contract with a new puppy.

It rarely includes a health guarantee (but may occasionally include a short 30-day guarantee).

These breeders will usually offer a dog buyer the option to pay more for their puppy to bypass spaying and neutering.

They rarely request their puppies to be returned if the new owner cannot care for them (sometimes even refusing the puppies).

### 3. The Backyard Breeder

The backyard breeder falls somewhere between a reputable breeder and a puppy mill.

Backyard breeders breed their dogs **for money as well as a love of dogs.**

Sadly, these breeders rarely have the funds or education to breed healthy dogs the way legitimate breeders do, and they rely on the sale of their puppies as their only income.

These breeders may or may not provide sanitary and safe living quarters for their dogs, depending on each specific breeder.

These are typical “homemade” businesses, and despite the love of dogs, backyard breeders still breed primarily for money.

They offer lower prices on their dogs to increase sales. These breeders also frequently cut the prices of puppies when they are not sold quickly (discount puppies).

This is done because they want to get rid of a previous litter before their next expected litter arrives, and there are usually multiple litters in cue.



# Tips on How to Find a Responsible Dog Breeder

Every responsible pet owner, as well as people who care about the well-being of all dogs, should make an effort whenever it's possible.

To adopt animals from shelters and rescue organizations or looking for a specific healthy breed – only from reputable breeders.

But how do you find a responsible dog breeder, and where to look? Below are some tips to make sure that the puppy you buy comes from a legitimate place.

## **Attend a Dog Show**

Well-bred dogs are featured in dog shows, so they're a great place to get referrals to quality breeders.

## **Ask for References**

A good breeder will have plenty of great references, and they won't mind providing them to you.

## **Ask a Vet for Referrals**

Vets see plenty of purebred dogs come through their practice, and they are familiar with their veterinary history.

## **Contact Local Breed-Specific Organizations**

Organizations like local hunting dog groups, gun dog associations, retriever clubs, and others will be aware of local legitimate breeders known for producing healthy dogs.

## **Contact the AKC**

The AKC maintains a database of breeders that you can reference before buying a puppy.

However, use caution when consulting this database since any breeder can list with the AKC, and checks on facilities are random spot checks, not mandatory.

## **Ask Friends**

If you have friends familiar with particular breeds or have a healthy dog of the breed you are looking for, ask them for a referral to their breeder.

## **Google!**

A reputable breeder will be ranked in search engines in connection with show dogs, working dogs, or dogs that have been recognized in some other way.

However, you can also use some tips on identifying a reputable dog breeder as you Google around and search for your next pup.

Depending on where you live, finding a local legit breeder can be either easy or near to impossible if there are no breeders in your city.

Because legitimate breeding business isn't always profitable, there aren't that many good breeders around.

But there's always plenty of puppy mills because they don't have the number of costs that legit businesses do.



## 20 Signs It's a Reputable Dog Breeder

After you find what you believe to be a reputable dog breeding business, now you need to vet them and confirm that it's actually a legit operation.



Below are the top 10 tips and signs that the place is reputable and worth buying a dog from.

1. They encourage you to visit your new puppy multiple times before bringing them home.
2. The breeder request or requires that your whole family meet your puppy before you bring them home.
3. The dogs and puppies on site are healthy, bright-eyed, and have appropriate energy levels.
4. They do not require that you use a specific veterinarian so long as you use a veterinarian.



5. Requires a puppy contract that includes a spay/neuter clause and a "return to breeder" clause, should you ever be unable to care for the puppy.
6. The breeder has a waiting list for their puppies.
7. They are unwilling to ship their puppies or sell them sight unseen.
8. They can provide health clearance certification for both parents.
9. A health guarantee is provided to all of their puppies.
10. They breed only a limited number of times per year (1 litter per bitch per year.)

Here are 10 More Signs...

1. The breeder will not breed a single bitch more than four times.
2. They will not breed a bitch under 12 months old.
3. They can provide full genealogy information for the parents of the puppies.
4. The living quarters of the dogs on site are clean and sanitary.
5. The dogs on site are clean, well-groomed without mats in their fur, or urine, or feces stains on their feet/legs/belly.
6. The puppies look healthy and are curious and eager to investigate you and their surroundings.
7. The parents (at least one parent) are on-site, healthy, and have a good temperament.
8. Often takes part in breed-specific organizations or canine activities like agility or flyball.
9. They have plenty of knowledge of the breed and are eager and willing to share that knowledge with you.
10. Asks you questions about you, your family, why you want a puppy, and what you are looking for in a puppy.

## **20 Signs It's a Disreputable Dog Breeder**

The above 20 signs are a good indication of a road map on finding a reputable dog breeder in your local area.

There are also ways to tell the opposite, so here are 20 more giveaways of a disreputable dog breeder you should watch out for.

1. They will not allow you to visit their dogs/puppies before you purchase.
2. When you visit, the area where the dogs are kept smells strongly of urine or feces.
3. When you visit, the puppies have urine or feces matted on their feet/fur.
4. They will not or cannot provide health clearances for the puppies' parents.
5. The puppies have a discharge of the eyes, nose, or mouth.
6. The puppies are lethargic and show little signs of playfulness or curiosity.
7. Puppies are available instantly without a waiting list.
8. The puppies' parents are not on site when you visit.
9. The puppies all appear shy, and all are reluctant to approach you.
10. They are unable to provide a genealogy for their dogs.
11. They are willing to sell puppies on a full ownership license without a spay/neuter contract.
12. The puppies and/or parent dogs shy away from the breeder.
13. The staff are not knowledgeable of the breed.
14. They not only breed purebred dogs, but they also breed designer dogs.
15. They breed their bitches repeatedly throughout the year.
16. They continue breeding their dogs into old age rather than retiring them after a few years.
17. The dogs and/or puppies do not fit the breed standard.
18. They allow you to bring home your puppy before 8-12 weeks old.
19. They refuse to provide the puppy's papers printed with the official AKC logo.
20. They seem to have plenty of puppies available year-round.



## **What to Expect from a Reputable Dog Breeding Business?**

When visiting a responsible breeder to purchase a puppy, you should expect to be asked several questions about you, your family, habits, activities, experience, living situation, and intentions with your new puppy.

Because these breeders care for their dogs, these “new owner questions” are to ensure that you are prepared to provide a good home for a dog and that you are matched up with a puppy that will adjust well to your lifestyle and household.

### **Some of the questions you can expect to hear from a good dog breeder include:**

- Why do you want a puppy?
- Have you ever had a puppy before, and are you familiar with introducing a new puppy to your home?

- Are you willing and financially able to provide the best veterinary care for your new puppy?
- Do you agree to spay or neuter your puppy and provide proof of spaying or neutering once the puppy is old enough to undergo the procedure?
- Do you have children? If so, how old are they?
- Do you plan to take your puppy to obedience classes and train them well?
- What will you do with your puppy when you leave town or go on vacation?
- Do you plan to let your puppy live indoors, or will they be an "outdoor dog"?
- Do you have a fenced yard? If not, how do you plan on exercising your new puppy?
- Have you had pets previously, or do you currently have pets at home?
- Do you have a veterinary reference (if you have had pets previously)?
- Do you lead an active lifestyle, or would you describe yourself as being more sedentary?



## Additional Questions...

- Will your puppy serve a specific purpose in your home or family? Will they be trained for service work, search and rescue work, alert work, etc.?
- Are you able to provide your puppy with daily exercise?
- Do you have experience with the breed? What type of experience?
- Do you own your home? If so, does your homeowner's association have any breed-specific regulations?
- Do you rent your home? If so, can you provide the name and number of your landlord so that they can confirm that you are permitted to have pets?
- Can you provide personal references to vouch for your character and ability to care for animals?
- Have you ever had to surrender a pet in the past? If so, why?
- Under what other circumstances would you surrender your pet?
- What are you looking for in your puppy as far as their personality?



## **Before We Go...**

Now you know how to find a reputable dog breeder in your area and how to identify them.

But as you finish reading and are about to close this article, we'd like to take a moment to ask you to reconsider your choice to buy your new puppy.

Shelters and rescues around the nation are full of purebred and mixed breed puppies, adult and senior dogs looking for homes.

Each year 3.3 million of those dogs are euthanized simply due to lack of space. Please consider saving a life and helping to reduce that statistic.

## **Common Questions about Reputable Dog Breeders**

Whether you want clearer information about reputable dog breeders or still have some questions, the following FAQs should help.

### **How Do I Find a Reputable Dog Breeder?**

There are several great ways to find someone breeding dogs responsibly. Start by asking family, friends, and your vet.

You can also check for listings from the American Kennel Club and local organizations. If you want a purebred dog, asking at dog shows is another great choice.

### **What Are the Best Dog Breeders?**

With so many breeders, it is hard to say if anyone is the best. Instead, it would help if you looked for signs of a good dog breeder.

Confirm that the puppies and parents look healthy. Good breeders will also have clean facilities and go out of their way to sell to responsible dog owners.

Are AKC Breeders Reputable?

Nearly a decade ago, some animal rights groups had complaints against the AKC regarding bad breeders.

However, those have been resolved, and future puppy parents can trust American Kennel Club breeders. They tend to be reputable.

Why Shouldn't You Buy a Dog from a Breeder?

Remember that buying from a breeder is not the only route to dog ownership. There are so many dogs in shelters, and you can change a dog's life by adopting one of them.

There is no need to bring new dogs into the world when so many are up for adoption.