



# Pet Behavior Counseling

*Helping you and your pet become best friends for life.*

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## **FINDING THE RIGHT DOG & BREEDER**

Dogs can make wonderful companions, but not every dog is the *right* dog for you.

Getting a dog is a 10 to 15 year commitment, so it is imperative that you pick the best breed for your family, and the best individual dog. Picking the right dog is an important decision, and one you should research thoroughly before making a commitment. Once you think you have decided on a breed, do lots of reading, talk to others with the breed as well as pet professionals such as veterinarians, trainers, kennel operators, and groomers. Make sure you ask about both the good and bad points of a specific breed. None are perfect dogs for everybody.

When looking for a breeder, you want to look for the following traits:

1. They will only breed one or two litters a year. The best breeders will have committed homes for their puppies before the mother is ever bred and therefore will probably have waiting lists. They will not need to advertise in the newspaper or Uncle Henry's.
2. They will typically only breed one or at most two breeds of dogs.
3. They will not breed adult dogs until they are at least 2 to 3 years old. Many health and temperament issues will not be apparent in a dog until it is at least two.
4. They will discuss in detail, with anyone interested in their puppies, the health issues affecting their breed. They should be able to provide documents from a veterinarian certifying that the parents and at least two previous generations are free of any of these health issues. Common health issues with many pure bred dogs include Hip Dysplasia, Central Progressive Retinal Atrophy, Subvalvular Aortic Stenosis, and others. For more information on breed specific health issues you can check the Canine Inherited Disorders Database maintained by the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre at the Atlantic Veterinary College, University of Prince Edward Island, and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association. at <http://www.upei.ca/cidd/intro.htm>.
5. Since most dogs in the US are pets and companions, the best breeders will focus on breeding dogs with a sound, friendly temperament.
6. They will raise the puppies in their home along with the adult dogs and their

human family. They will not be raised in isolation in a basement or in another building.

7. They will allow you to see both parents so that you can evaluate their health, behavior and temperament. If the mother has been artificially inseminated, they will put you in contact with the breeder that owns the stud and the best breeders will have video of the stud so you can observe his behavior.
8. They will actively socialize the puppies before letting them go home with people. This should start at 4 weeks of age and continue until it is legal to sell the puppy at 8 weeks of age. Specifically, you will want to ask them how many children, men, women, and non-family members have gently handled, trained, and played with the pups daily. The best breeders will have this documented in a daily journal.
9. They will not suggest you get multiple puppies at the same time, but will in fact actively discourage you from getting more than one.
10. They will offer a written contract with health guarantees that also offers to take the puppy back, at any time, for any reason.
11. They will begin housetraining the puppies and the puppies will have a designated housetraining area within the space where the puppies are confined. Be aware of breeders that keep puppies in rooms covered in newspaper or other materials where the puppies are urinating and defecating anywhere and everywhere in the room. You should only see piles and puddles in the designated housetraining area and if the breeder has an adequate cleaning schedule there should be very few of those. The best breeders will start crate training the puppies, in an airline style crate, before sending them to their new homes.
12. They will ask you lots of questions about why you want a puppy, why you want this particular breed, and how you will care for the puppy. They will want to verify that you have time for the puppy, will enroll it in a reward based training class, and have a yard and home suitable for the puppies exercise needs. They will ask you for references.
13. They will discuss with you the advantages of spaying/neutering your puppy and if it is not suitable for breeding will require that you have the puppy spayed/neutered.
14. They will be licensed as a breeding kennel in the state of Maine. When you find a breeder, call the Maine Animal Welfare Program and verify that the breeder is licensed and ask if any complaints have been filed against the breeder. The phone number for the AWP is 1-877-269-9200