

# The **REPUTABLE** Breeder:



## Why You Want To Buy from a Code of Ethics Breeder ...

By Karen Black ©2009

You've decided you'd like expand your family to include a dog, and you've done some looking around. After a bit of research you know the breed of dog you would like. So, what now?

### **First Things First**

One of the first things you'll want to know is that not all breeders are created equally. Loosely defined, the term breeder simply refers to a person that has a male and a female dog that they've allowed to breed, with a resulting pregnancy and puppies they want to sell. Some breeders are very diligent, others are not. Some take the time to learn about their breed, educate themselves about the many related concerns - health, temperament, puppy-rearing - all the things that make a difference to getting a healthy, happy, well-adjusted puppy. So, who are the other breeders?

You've likely heard terms like backyard breeder or puppy mill but are uncertain about what they mean. In a nutshell, a backyard breeder is someone who happens to have a couple of females and a male (or perhaps a friend or neighbour that owns a male), and they breed them with minimal or no knowledge about breeding and raising puppies. Once born, the backyard breeder lets the mom raise the

puppies until the owner feels they are old enough to be taken from her. The puppies are often sold to whatever buyer comes along, without too much regard for whether the puppy is going to an appropriate home. A puppy mill is an operation that has many females and males, often in filthy, horrendous conditions, and they breed them over and over without regard for the health and well-being of the dogs or their puppies. Puppy mills typically sell to other puppy mills and to pet stores. These descriptions are the short-form version; there are many resources on the internet that provide additional information about backyard breeders and puppy mills.

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### **Codes of Ethics**

You want to look for a Code of Ethics breeder (COE). This is a breeder who agrees to a published Code of Ethics, and has signed an agreement to abide by them. Codes of ethics are a set of guidelines breed clubs develop, that outline the “rules” breeders must follow. Failure to follow the rules results in the breeder losing their status as a COE breeder, and being removed from the breeders' list maintained by the club. While guidelines vary depending on the breed and the breed club, essentially what is included in a Code of Ethics are things

like the appropriate age to breed the dogs, the number of litters and spacing of litters, the health documentation that should be in place before breeding, and the level of care given to the dogs and puppies. Some COE's also suggest the use of written sales agreements and guidelines for providing guarantees on puppies sold.

What does this mean for you? It means that you are buying from a breeder who belongs to a breed club and therefore has a vested interest in doing things the right way. COE breeders have several years' involvement in their breed and are committed to maintaining an excellent reputation. They register their puppies through accredited kennel clubs, ensuring the puppy you get is truly a purebred. Through breed club involvement and through attending dog shows, breeders stay current with pertinent breed information such as genetic issues and health concerns, and they do the appropriate health testing to ensure that their puppies are the healthiest puppies possible. A COE breeder will also give due consideration to the temperament of the dogs they use for breeding so the resulting puppies will have the ideal temperament for the breed.

### **Forever and Ever**

Breeders who go the distance care immensely about their dogs and their puppies; they use only healthy dogs for breeding and they ensure their puppies are well cared for, well-socialized little balls of fluff. Their puppies go to their new homes at an appropriate age – and to homes they have carefully chosen, with their first priority being the happiness and wellbeing of their puppies. Code of Ethics breeders do not sell their puppies to pet stores, nor do they sell their puppies at flea markets, fairs, or from the

back of their vehicle. COE breeders are interested in their puppies throughout their lifetime. They are available for your questions and concerns, offering tips and ideas that not only help your new puppy to transition smoothly into your home, but also through the many stages of the dog's life. Given all the aspects that Code of Ethics breeders adhere to, it goes without saying that these breeders fall under the classification of "reputable breeders".

How do you find a reputable breeder? One of the best ways is to contact the national or regional breed club for the breed you are interested in. Many breed clubs maintain breeder lists on their websites and breeders included on that list have signed a Code of Ethics. No doubt you are wondering what you should expect to pay for a puppy from a reputable breeder. While prices vary, as a rule you will pay more for a puppy from a reputable breeder than a backyard breeder. While you may be tempted to go with the backyard puppy that costs less, it bears remembering that backyard breeders generally do not do health testing or raise their puppies in optimal conditions that give them the very best start in life. The bargain puppy often ends up costing much more after several visits to the veterinarian for any variety of issues. Pet store puppies tend to cost about the same as, or more than, puppies from reputable breeders.

The cute little puppy that you purchase will be a part of your family for many years. You will fall in love the moment you lay eyes on him or her and that love will grow with each passing day. With some research and due diligence in choosing a breeder, your new puppy should fit into your family with relative ease, bringing you many years of joy and laughter.

