

Guidance to Assist You in Finding a Suitable Puppy/Breeder

How do you decide which breeders are responsible breeders?

The SNC Better Breeders Scheme aims to help you find a puppy from a reputable breeder, however you need to satisfy yourself that any breeder you approach, be they a member of the scheme or not, is breeding for the right reasons and has the welfare of their dogs as their main priority. The best way of finding this out is to ask questions!

Your initial contact with a breeder is likely to be by telephone. Here are some initial questions that can help you weed out the breeders you would not want to deal with and help you on your way to finding a great dog! Remember that someone who is selling puppies and who doesn't want to take the time to answer your questions is probably not a breeder you want to deal with. The breeder should be eager to help you learn all you can. After all, they might be sending one of their puppies home with you!

"What is your primary goal in breeding?"

They may already have a litter planned or even born and so should be able to explain their motives for this particular litter.

A good breeder breeds for both conformation (how the dog looks) and temperament and more often than not, because they are planning to keep a puppy from the litter to show or for working activities. A responsible breeder breeds to eliminate physical traits that can cause health problems for the dog and also tries to produce dogs of sound temperament - dogs who are not aggressive, who do not snap or bite out of fear or nervousness, etc..

"Why did you breed this particular litter? What are you hoping to accomplish in your breeding program?"

With this question, you can find out a lot about how serious this breeder is and how careful they are about breeding negative traits out and positive traits in. A breeder who can't answer these questions is not a breeder you want to deal with.

"How long have you been involved with this breed? What can you tell me about the breed's history, its strong and weak points, and whether it might be right for me?"

A responsible breeder will be quick to point out the disadvantages as well as the good points about the breed!

Everyone has to start somewhere, so the length of time a breeder has been breeding dogs is not the most important fact to know. However, asking this question will help you eliminate the breeder who says this is his first dog and what he knows about the breed is that they are really cute and fun to be around. Look for someone knowledgeable. Good breeders love to

talk about their breed! And in answering this question, a good breeder will ask you questions too!

“How old are your puppies when you sell them? Will the puppy have had any of the necessary inoculations when we get it, and will it have been checked by a vet?”

Reputable breeders do not allow their puppies to go to their new homes until they are approximately 8 weeks old.

“What are the most common health problems with this breed?”

Look for a breeder who will answer questions about health honestly and knowledgeably.

“What happens if we buy a puppy from you and it doesn’t work out?”

A good breeder will not only say it is OK for you to return a puppy that isn’t working out, a good breeder will demand it! Good breeders want to guarantee that their puppies will not end up being passed from home to home or being given to a welfare organisation.

“Do you provide a Sales Contract with the puppy and is it possible to have a copy of the Contract prior to visiting?”

A good breeder will always have a Contract they enter into with a puppy purchaser and will be happy to provide a copy. Good breeders understand how difficult breeding a sound dog can be and their contract should explain what will happen if there is a problem with the puppy.

“What kind of help can we expect from you after we have taken a puppy home?”

Expect a good breeder to be willing to offer advice on housebreaking, training and dealing with problems after you have purchased the puppy. Good breeders care about what happens to the dogs they produce and will want to do whatever they can to ensure that their puppies are doing well in their new homes.

“May I meet the puppy’s parents? See the parents’ health records? The puppy’s health records? Where they dogs are kept?”

When you have identified Breeder/s that you may be interested in acquiring a puppy from, then the next stage will be to visit them. Many breeders will be happy for you to visit irrespective of whether they have puppies available or a litter planned. Be mindful that if a breeder has puppies already born, it is quite normal for them to not allow visitors to their premises until puppies are at least three weeks old. This is to reduce the risk of infection and to ensure the dam of the puppies can concentrate on looking after her litter without the stress of visitors.

A good breeder will be proud to show you where the dogs sleep and eat and will want you to meet the parents (if they are both on site) or at least the puppy's mother – quite often the Sire will belong to someone else and may even live in another country! They should also be keen to show you any and all records. Beware of any breeder who asks you to wait outside while they bring the puppy to you. What are they hiding?

The Southern Newfoundland Club has produced a checklist to help guide you through the process of visiting breeders. You may wish to download and print the checklist and take it with you – it is easy to forget the questions in the excitement of meeting the dogs/puppies if you don't have an aide-memoire!