

Educated Animals (Leicester)

www.educatedanimalsleicester.co.uk



HOW TO BUY A PUPPY

Whilst we fully support and encourage people to consider rehoming a dog when they want a furry addition to the family, the reality is that people do buy puppies and with the worrying trend for more and more puppies to be bred, an increase in illegally imported puppies and puppy farmed puppies, the purpose of this information sheet is to give puppy buyers the information needed to avoid buying from dubious breeders.

When researching your new puppy look for:

- ✓ Dog breeders who perform all the necessary health tests for their breed (see below)
- ✓ Puppies that can be viewed with the mother present and, if possible, the father
- ✓ Parents and puppies that are look clean, healthy, friendly and confident
- ✓ Breeders who are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their breed, and happy to talk to you (but don't expect them to be able to do this at a drop of a hat – people can be busy so arrange a time to chat)
- ✓ A breeder who asks you questions about your suitability to own a puppy

Avoid:

- ✗ Puppies that cannot be seen with their mother – accept NO excuses whatsoever
- ✗ Cold, very grubby and smelly or frightened puppies
- ✗ Breeders with puppies from lots of different breeds or lots of different litters
- ✗ A breeder who is happy to sell you a puppy without asking questions
- ✗ Breeders who become defensive when you ask sensible questions

Health Tests

A reputable breeder will perform the health tests recommended by the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the UK Kennel Club on all dogs that they breed from, male and female including cross-breeds such as cockerpoos, labradoodles. Many dog breeds will have recommended tests and the [Kennel Club website includes a database](#) that lists these tests. You can even [check what tests the parents of your potential puppy have had](#) and the results (you'll need the dog's Kennel Club registered name).

There are many DNA screening schemes run by the Kennel Club and specific breed organisations. These tests are used to identify dogs who are clear of a condition, a carrier or those who are affected. This information allows breeders to make informed decisions about which of their dogs should and should not be bred from and which dogs are suitable to pair together. Some conditions are life threatening and all reputable breeders carry out the appropriate tests for their breed. Information about [DNA screening for individual breeds can be found on the Kennel Club website](#).

The purpose is to identify health problems that are passed on from parent to offspring through a dog's genes and minimise the risk of this happening by excluding dogs who are affected by health conditions from breeding so that these conditions are hopefully eradicated. Reputable breeders want to reduce the risk of health problems in their puppies and their breed in general. Good breeders will be happy to discuss these health tests with you and will have evidence of the results of tests undertaken on their dogs. Your vet will be able to give further information on the tests and what the results indicate.

Other health tests don't rely on DNA tests but utilise x-rays, scans and ultrasounds. There are lots of examinations for eye and heart conditions and joint problems. As outlined above you can find which tests are appropriate for the breed of dog you are interested in buying above. Note that some conditions require annual checks and others are just done once.

The Kennel Club and the BVA run [joint health schemes](#) for some conditions.

Puppy Temperament

A breeder should be able to talk to you in detail about each puppy's personality and guide you in choosing a puppy that is suitable for you and your household. Whilst all breeds have traits, all puppies' personalities are different. Within the same litter, you can find cuddly hooligans and more passive puppies. Breeders should be engaged and enthusiastic about the puppies they choose to bring into the world and should take an active interest in ensuring you and your puppy are the best fit. If they are uninterested and disengaged – go elsewhere. You don't have to become lifelong friends with the breeder but you are going to be bringing home a puppy who will live with you for 10+ years and you need someone who is going to be happy to give advice if needed.

Parents' Temperament

You must not only meet the mother of the puppies but also see her interact with the puppies. Some unscrupulous breeders will bring in a dog who is not the mother. Mother dogs will feed, groom and interact calmly with their puppies. If the puppies are still very young, the mother will be producing milk. If possible, also meet the father and other canine relatives. The mother should be clean, healthy-looking, happy and friendly. Mother dogs of very young puppies may be wary of people coming to look at the puppies and this is normal, but when the puppies are older, she should be more welcoming. Avoid puppies from mothers who are nervous or aggressive, as this is a trait that could be passed onto the puppies. Fearful/aggressive dogs should not be bred from. Not all dogs will be enthusiastic when they greet you, but they should be friendly enough and you should be able to interact with them appropriately. Beware any breeders who bring a dog in the room, hold onto them tightly and then take them out again. If you can't approach the dog then this is a reliable indicator that their temperament is not sound.

Socialisation and Habituation

Breeders are responsible for ensuring that the puppies they produce receive socialisation with different people and habituation to everyday sights and sounds during their first eight weeks of life. It is not acceptable for breeders to not make efforts to do this. When you take your puppy home at eight weeks, they are *not* a blank slate – they are the sum of their genetics and their life experience so far. As soon as your puppy is born they are learning about the world and as soon as their ears and eyes open it is important that they are carefully introduced to their environment and different people.

Ask your breeder what they do to make sure their puppies have a good start for example, have the puppies met sensible children? Have they been in a car, or in a crate or heard the washing machine? Have they been handled gently and regularly? Are they kept in the house or in a kennel? Puppies who are raised in the house are far more likely to have received greater socialisation and habituation than those kept in kennels. If you are buying a dog to live in your house – get a puppy who has been raised in a house.

Feeding and Care

Reputable breeders can advise you fully on feeding and caring for your puppy. Some breeds require specialist care for the coats and your breeder should be able to help you with information about this.

Avoid Imported Puppies, Puppy Farmers and Dealers

Be cautious of breeders that advertise lots of different breeds of dog or who have multiple litters available at the same time. Beware of adverts in newspapers that look similar but advertise different breeds and different contact numbers (usually mobile phone numbers). It is not uncommon for reputable breeders to specialise in more than one breed but you should check out anyone breeding several breeds of dog carefully.

Never buy a puppy if the mother is not available when you go and see the litter. Don't accept excuses such as she is out for a walk, tired or at the vet. Make another appointment where you can return when the mother is present. If the mother is not available this can be a good indicator that the puppies have been imported or been sold to a dealer and the mother is still with the breeder. Good breeders *do not* sell to dealers. Breeders who do this do not treat their dogs well, the mothers have litter after litter, live solitary lives where they are not loved, often with no outdoor access or attention from people. These puppies do not have a good start, are not fed properly, socialised and often removed from the mother at too early an age (puppies should not be removed from their mother before seven weeks of age).

Never buy a puppy from someone who insists that they deliver the puppy or that you meet to collect the pup when you have not first been to meet the puppies, seen the mother and the environment they have been raised in. Of course, if you are buying a puppy from a long distance away the breeder may well be happy to meet you half way but no good breeder would insist on this or agree to it without having met you first.

Never buy puppies from pet shops, no matter how slick the set up or how sorry you feel for the puppies. These puppies are often produced on puppy farms with little care and research shows that puppies bred in this way can develop serious health and behavioural problems. No breeder who cares about their puppies would sell them to a pet shop.

Bear in mind that puppy farms don't necessarily sell their puppies from farms! Puppy farmers sell on to puppy supermarkets, pet shops or to dealers who may sell from an ordinary looking house but the mother will not be present and the dealer will not know much about the puppies.

Conclusion

If you want a happy, healthy and mentally sound puppy you will need to do some research and perhaps be prepared to wait for the right breeder to have a litter. You should be ready to answer lots of questions because breeders who care about their puppies want the best for them. In the

same way that you should be wary about finding the right breeder, the breeder will want to be sure that you are the right owner. Be courteous with the breeder, contact them at a reasonable time and be polite as you ask your questions. It really is worth the effort to make sure you find your perfect dog.

The [RSPCA](#) provide a very useful information sheet about buying a puppy.

The websites listed below have some upsetting images and information, so please be warned before you look at them, but it is important that people are generally aware of the pitfalls of buying a puppy without research or armed with the right knowledge and questions to ask.

<http://www.puppywatch.force9.co.uk/>

<http://www.puppylovecampaigns.org/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07cgscx>