

# **Don't Go Barking Up the Wrong Tree: The 10 Best Questions to Find a Great Dog Breeder**

## **Highlight**

Got your heart set on a purebred puppy? Find the perfect pooch by asking the right questions – all suggested by top dog experts and veterinarians.

## **The 10 Best Questions**

Keep this quick version in your hand while you're talking with breeders. Suggested best answers are below.

1. What are your business credentials? How long have you been breeding dogs?
2. Do you breed dogs on a full-time or part-time basis?
3. How many breeds of dogs do you raise?
4. What professional associations or breed clubs do you belong to? What shows and competitions do you actively participate in?
5. What are your breeding and raising practices? How do you socialize your puppies?
6. May I take a tour of your facility before buying a puppy from you? Will I be able to meet the puppy's parents?
7. Will you furnish at least three references from your previous clients that I can contact?
8. What written proof do you offer on the health clearances for the sire, dam and puppies?
9. Do you use a standard puppy temperament attitude tests, such as the Volhard?
10. What else will I get when I buy a puppy from you (registration papers, diet information, etc.)?

## **The Golden Question**

The million-dollar question you almost forgot to ask.

What guarantees do you offer with your puppies? Will you unconditionally take back any dog of your breeding at any time?

## **The 10 Best Answers**

## **1. What are your business credentials? How long have you been breeding dogs?**

Three years of experience is considered minimum and longer is better. Great breeders are passionate about the breed. They actively seek top dogs for mating through their own network of like-minded breeders.

**Bonus tip:** Ask upfront about puppy availability. The best breeders have only one or two litters per year and often have long customer waiting lists.

[Related: Wondering About Dog Breeders' Qualifications? Ask These 10 Best Questions](#)

## **2. Do you breed dogs on a full-time or part-time basis?**

Don't buy your new best friend forever from a part-time, backyard breeder. These breeders lurk on the Internet, Craig's List, and neighborhood telephone poles. Why skip critical health guarantees and socialization just to save a few dollars?

Award-winning pet author Gina Spadafori warns, "Defective dogs most often come from two kinds of breeders: the clueless or the careless. Clueless breeders are blissfully ignorant of the potential for congenital problems and the importance of socialization. Careless breeders know full well but couldn't care less."

## **3. How many breeds of dogs do you raise?**

The best answer is "One." Pick a breeder dedicated to improving the breed's stock through ethical breeding practices.

Run like hell if the breeder tells you they raise more than two breeds. You've just rescued yourself from the clutches of a puppy mill.

[Related: The Warning Signs of a Bad Dog Breeder: 10 BQ](#)

## **4. What professional associations or breed clubs do you belong to? What shows and competitions do you actively participate in?**

The best breeders are proud of their awards, ribbons and prize-worthy pooches. Listen for both national breed-specific clubs, such as the Golden Retriever Club of America, and state, regional or local clubs.

## **5. What are your breeding and raising practices? How do you socialize your puppies?**

The Westminster Kennel Club (Best of Show competitions) advises: "Responsible breeders' goals are to improve the breed's health and physical traits. Good breeders continuously study their pedigrees and breeding stock, do health checks, properly raise and socialize their puppies, and stand behind their puppies."

The ideal socialization scenario are breeders who integrate newborn puppies right into the heart of their homes, such as in an enclosed pen set up in the family kitchen or living room. Many studies found that the puppies touched most frequently and earliest by people become the most devoted pets.

## **6. May I take a tour of your facility before buying a puppy from you? Will I be able to meet the puppy's parents?**

Buyer beware if a breeder doesn't agree to a tour or hesitates. It's critical to buy a puppy born on the breeder's premises, not shipped in from a puppy mill.

Asking to meet both parents is a bit of a trick question. The mother is almost always available, but the most reputable breeders send their female dogs away to another breeder to mate with a champion male dog.

[Related: What to Ask When Touring a Dog Breeder's Facility](#)

## **7. Will you furnish at least three references from your previous clients that I can contact?**

This is so important to ask! Be sure to actually do it.

"Don't be afraid to ask tough questions to separate the gold-standard breeders from those just wanting a quick buck," advises celebrity veterinarian and author Dr. Marty Becker.

[Related: What to Ask a Dog Breeder's References](#)

## **8. What written proof do you offer on the health clearances for the sire, dam and puppies?**

A good breeder will make sure your puppy's parents are free of health complications prevalent in that breed, such as hip dysplasia for almost all big breeds or hearing troubles in terriers.

Also ask:

- What precautions do you take to avoid congenital defects in your breed line?
- How long is your health guarantee good for? (Many conditions show up only later in the dog's life.)

## **9. Do you use one a standard puppy temperament attitude tests, such as the Volhard?**

Another popular temperament test is Sue Sternberg's Assess-a-Pet™.

This question may throw some breeders for a loop, but you want a temperament test to know you're getting the best pick of the litter. The tests are easy, quick, and free. Make sure you're getting a great personality along with the new wet nose.

[Related: Get the Pick of the Litter with These 10 Best Questions](#)

## **10. What else will I get when I buy a puppy from you?**

Expect the breeder to offer at least:

- A written purchase contract.
- Properly executed Registration Certificate with the exact date of birth and the AKC, UKC or CKC (in Canada) registration numbers of the parents.
- Health clearances, veterinary certifications for both parents.
- Puppy's current vaccination, parasite control, and health records.
- Written conditions for returning a health-defective dog.

The best breeders won't be able to let their puppies go home with you (a stranger!) without pressing into your hands a ton of information on diet, care, and breed-specific advice.

### **The Golden Question**

The million-dollar question you almost forgot to ask.

**What guarantees do you offer with your puppies? Will you unconditionally take back any of your dogs at any time and for any reason?**

Good breeders allow you 72 hours to have your new puppy checked by your own veterinarian and will refund or replace the puppy if there are major health problems.

Great breeders – worth their weight in gold – are willing to take back one of their dogs at any time and for any reason, even if you can't keep the dog after a personal crisis, move or divorce.

You'll get a lifetime of your peace of mind along with a beloved new pup, knowing that the breeder will always be there for you both.

### **QDoc's Q-Tipsters**

The very best dog breeders will ask *you* lots of questions because they want to know if you'll be a good puppy mom or dad. Trust the breeder who doesn't give up their puppies to just anyone.

### **References**

1. ABC News Transcript, "Nightline Investigation: The Puppy Mill," March 27, 2009.
2. American Kennel Club, *The Complete Dog Book*, NY: Random House Digital, 2006.

3. American Kennel Club, "Finding Your Dog," [http://www.akc.org/future\\_dog\\_owner/find\\_breeder.cfm](http://www.akc.org/future_dog_owner/find_breeder.cfm)
4. American Veterinary Medical Association, "Selecting a Dog," [https://ebusiness.avma.org/EBusiness50/files/productdownloads/SelectDog\\_En.pdf](https://ebusiness.avma.org/EBusiness50/files/productdownloads/SelectDog_En.pdf)
5. Becker, Dr. Marty, Gina Spadafori, Carol Kline, and Mikkel Becker, *The Ultimate Dog Lover: The Best Experts' Advice for a Happy, Healthy Dog With Stories and Photos of Incredible Canines*, Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc. Publishers, 2008
6. *Austin American-Statesman* (Texas), "Do Homework Before Picking Your Next Pup," by Sarah Beckham, July 19, 2010, page D1.
7. Benal, Jolanta, *The Dog Trainer's Complete Guide to a Happy, Well-Behaved Pet*, NY: Macmillan, 2011.
8. Bernese Mountain Dogs.com, "Ask the Breeder and Breeder Practices for Puppy Buyers," [http://www.bmdinfo.org/newpages/Ask\\_the\\_Breeder.php](http://www.bmdinfo.org/newpages/Ask_the_Breeder.php)
9. Breeders.net, "Checklist to Evaluate a Dog," <http://www.breeders.net/>
10. Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, "Questions You Should Ask," [http://www.i-love-cavaliers.com/Breeder\\_Questions.html](http://www.i-love-cavaliers.com/Breeder_Questions.html)
11. Cesar's Way.com, "How to Avoid Puppy Mills," <http://www.cesarway.com/tips/puppytips/how-to-avoid-puppy-mills>
12. CityDog.org (Boise, ID), "Hallmarks of a Responsible Breeder," [http://www.citydog.org/choosing/hallmarks\\_of\\_a\\_responsible\\_breed.htm](http://www.citydog.org/choosing/hallmarks_of_a_responsible_breed.htm)
13. Cocker Spaniel Rescue (British Columbia), "Questions to Ask the Breeder BEFORE You Buy a Puppy," [http://www.csrbc.org/pdfs/before\\_buying\\_a\\_puppy.pdf](http://www.csrbc.org/pdfs/before_buying_a_puppy.pdf)
14. Doggies.com Dog Blog, "Top 10 Questions Related to Health," *The Dog Lady*, September 14, 2010, <http://doggies.com/blog>
15. Gorman, M. A., *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Puppies*, NY: Penguin Books, 2005.
16. GriffonPoint.com (Alberta, Canada), "Selecting Your Breeder," by Shannon Ford, <http://www.griffonpoint.com/html/breeder.htm>
17. International Doodle Owners Group, Inc., "Selecting a Breeder," <http://idog.biz/AboutBreeders.html>
18. PetConnection.com, "Ask a Dog Breeder These Questions Before You Buy," by Gina Spadafori, <http://www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&A=302>

19. PetPlace.com, “16 Questions You Should Ask the Breeder,” by Dr. Debra Primovic, <http://www.petplace.com/dogs/16-questions-you-should-ask-the-breeder/page1.aspx>
20. Phouka.com, “Questions to Ask a Reputable Dog Breeder,” by Robin N. Fingerson, [http://www.phouka.com/dogs/bdr\\_questions.html](http://www.phouka.com/dogs/bdr_questions.html)
21. Potomac Valley Golden Retriever Club, “All the Poop on Puppies,” <http://www.pvgrc.org/poop/poop.pdf>
22. *Regina Leader Post* (Canada), “Before You Buy a Dog, Do Your Research,” by Kim Pemberton, July 2, 2011, page G3.
23. Riley Training Center, “Dog and Puppy Questions,” <http://rileytrainingcenter.blogspot.com/2008/12/dog-and-puppy-questions.html>
24. San Francisco Gate.com, “Your Whole Pet: Finding a Good Breeder,” by Christie Keith, June 26, 2007, <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/YOUR-WHOLE-PET-Finding-a-Good-Breeder-2554634.php>
25. Samfans.org (Samoyed Rescue), “Which Is the Right Dog for Me?” by Elizabeth Crosby Simpson, [http://www.samfans.org/faq/18\\_questions.html](http://www.samfans.org/faq/18_questions.html)
26. Sue Sternberg.com, “Assess-a-Pet™,” <http://www.suesternberg.com/00assess.html>
27. Walkowicz, Chris, *Choosing a Dog for Dummies*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2011.
28. *The Washington Post*, “What to Ask a Dog Breeder,” by Susan McCullough, October 5, 2003, page M8.
29. Westminster Kennel Club, “Find an Ethical Breeder,” <http://www.westminsterkennelclub.org/dogshows/rightdog.html#breeder>
30. *Vancouver Sun*, Be Prepared: Know What to Ask a Breeder Before You Buy,” by Kim Pemberton, June 24, 2011, <http://www.vancouversun.com/life/prepared+Know+what+breeder+before/5003843/story.html>
31. Versatility in Poodles, Inc., “Questions to Ask a Standard Poodle Breeder,” [http://www.vipoodle.org/PDF\\_Files/Standard\\_Poodle.pdf](http://www.vipoodle.org/PDF_Files/Standard_Poodle.pdf)
32. Volhard.com “Choosing Your Puppy (PAT): Volhard’s Puppy Aptitude Testing,” by Jack and Wendy Volhard, <http://www.volhard.com/pages/pat.php>

©2015 - 10 Best Questions, LLC. All rights reserved.  
[www.10bestquestions.com](http://www.10bestquestions.com)

by Dr. Dede Bonner, The Question Doctor  
10 BQ Document # PET026-01

This article is for information only and is not intended to be a substitute for personal,  
professional, legal, or medical advice.