



## How to find a responsible dog breeder

The Humane Society of the United States encourages you to consider adoption from a shelter or rescue. If you choose to purchase a dog from a breeder, the following guidelines will help you make sure your dog comes from a responsible breeder instead of a puppy mill.

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### A responsible breeder:

#### **KEEPS DOGS IN A SPACIOUS, CLEAN HOME**

Responsible breeders only sell puppies to people they meet in person—never at pet stores or over the internet to people they haven't met. Responsible breeders encourage you to visit and spend time with the pup's parents—at a minimum, the mother.

A responsible breeder willingly shows you all areas where puppies and breeding dogs spend their time. Those areas are clean, spacious and well-maintained. Responsible breeders' dogs appear lively, clean and healthy and don't shy away from visitors.

Responsible breeders keep their breeding dogs as any responsible owner would keep their pets: not crowded, dirty or continually confined to cages. Their dogs will be in roomy spaces that meet the needs of their particular breed; for example, most small breeds will be housed inside the home,

while sporting breeds will have plenty of space for exercise, etc. (National breed clubs can provide input on the specific needs of each breed of dog.)

#### **IS TRANSPARENT AND OPEN**

A responsible breeder encourages multiple visits and wants your entire family to meet the puppy. Before and after purchase, they offer guidance for the care and training of your puppy and are available to help. They will also be able to provide references from other families who have previously purchased one of their puppies.

A responsible breeder will have a strong relationship with one or more local veterinarians and can show you individual records of veterinary visits for your puppy and her parents. Responsible breeders can explain in detail the potential genetic and developmental problems inherent to the breed and provide documentation that the puppy's parents and



A responsible breeder will welcome your visit and will show you where the breeding dogs and puppies spend their time.

grandparents have been professionally evaluated in an effort to breed those problems out of their puppies. (This will include testing for genetic diseases for which there are valid testing protocols available.)

Responsible breeders are often actively involved with local, state and national clubs that specialize in their specific breed. Many of them also compete with the dogs in conformation events, obedience trials, tracking and agility trials, or other performance events.

Responsible breeders provide you with a written contract and health guarantee and allow plenty of time for you to read it thoroughly. They will not require that you use a specific veterinarian.

### KEEPS NUMBERS SMALL

A responsible breeder keeps only one or a few types of dogs and is knowledgeable about the breeds' requirements. They don't always have puppies but may keep a list of interested people for the next litter or refer people to other responsible breeders or breed clubs.

A responsible breeder meets the psychological—as well as physical—needs of their dogs by providing toys,

socialization, exercise and enrichment as befits the specific breed.

### WANTS TO KNOW YOU

A responsible breeder cares about the families who are taking home their puppies. They will ask you to explain why you want a dog and will ask you to explain who in your family will be responsible for the pup's daily care and training, where the dog will spend



Responsible breeders don't sell their puppies at pet stores—and responsible pet stores only offer puppies from local shelters.

most of his or her time, and what “rules” have been decided upon for the puppy—for example, whether the dog will be allowed on furniture.

They may ask you to provide proof from your landlord or condominium board (if applicable) that you are allowed to have a dog, and they may ask for a veterinary reference if you have had other pets.

Responsible breeders will ask you to sign a contract stating that you will spay or neuter the dog unless you will be actively showing him or her. The contract will also state that you will return the dog to the breeder should you be unable to keep the dog at any point in the dog's life.

## Responsible breeder checklist:

- Responsible breeders only sell puppies to people they have met in person—never through pet stores or online to people they haven't met.
- Responsible breeders encourage you to visit and see where the puppy was born and raised.
- Responsible breeders will not keep dogs in crowded spaces or cages. Their dogs will be in clean, roomy, comfortable areas.
- Responsible breeders breed sparingly. They specialize in only one or a few breeds and don't always have puppies available.
- Responsible breeders will show you individual records of veterinary visits for your puppy and the parents.
- Responsible breeders will want you to sign a contract and will ask you to return the puppy to them if you are ever unable to keep the dog.

To learn more, visit [humanesociety.org/breeders](https://www.humanesociety.org/breeders).

