

Finding A Good Dog Breeder

Purebred puppies, like the poodle pups you've been seeing, weren't churned out of a mold. One thing you must know is that those puppies that you see with one breeder are not the same as those with another breeder, whether of the same breed or any other.

How your puppy turns out is the result of the knowledge and skill of the breeder—right from the time he selected the parents to the time he raised the puppies to the age you find it and want to take it home.

Is there really a “private party” seller? You are sure to have come across some people who insist that they got their poodle pup from a “private seller” rather than a “professional breeder.” Really speaking, a breeder is one who owns a female dog who has just given birth to a litter of pups. One litter is all it takes to make a breeder of anyone. But few people know that.

In fact, every puppy has a breeder, of course, excluding abandoned pups born on the street. What you should ask, therefore, is: Did the breeder of this pup produce this litter responsibly or irresponsibly? Did he have the right knowledge or not?

There are, as you perhaps know, two types of breeders:

- Responsible and knowledgeable and
- Irresponsible and unknowledgeable

▪ **Responsible and knowledgeable breeders:**

- These breeders breed only those poodles that have been medically tested to be free of genetic health problems.
- They breed only poodles of excellent temperaments, i.e. the dogs they choose are not nervous, timid, shy, hyperactive nor aggressive.
- They have updated information on canine genetics and avoid breeding dogs that are close in relation to each other.
- They always sell pups from their own home, and not from a pet shop or to a broker.
- A responsible, knowledgeable breeder does more with his dogs than just breed them such as giving them obedience and agility training, rescue, dog clubs and so on.
- They can quote other equally responsible, knowledgeable breeders as references.

▪ **Irresponsible and unknowledgeable breeders:**

- If you buy your poodle from an unknowledgeable breeder, your puppy is likely to grow up looking and behaving very differently from what you anticipated.

• **How to choose the right breed:** There are shelves of books written on this subject, but let's get to the heart of the problem and give you the essence of it all—enough for you to get started on with confidence.

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▪ **Compatibility—you need to get along with each other:** First, compatibility is crucial. One cause of problems between new owner and pup is that the dog and his master don't suit each other. Various kinds of mismatches occur, some of which are:

- You're the permissive kind and you choose a determined Chow
- You're a neatness-freak and you go out and bring home a heavy-shedding Pomeranian
- You belong to a sociable family but make the mistake of choosing a suspicious Komondor
- Lastly, you are a young family with a couple of toddlers, but you disregard that by choosing a fragile Chihuahua

Often, people choose a breed on the basis of its muscular or flowing or angelic or because there's a litter up the street that's going for free. A month or a year later, their find to their utter disappointment that they're completely incompatible with their new pet—one these new owners had begun a 10-15 year commitment with! The owner, then, tries to tame the dog by attempting to change its basic and natural characteristics so that they can live together amicably but purebred characteristics can't be changed. To avoid such a painful and distressing situation, we give you tips to make the right choice of breed:

- Take a realistic look at yourself, your schedules and your lifestyle
- Now, decide which canine characteristics you can get along well with
- Group several breeds with the same characteristics
- Choose one from among them

❖ **How to choose the right breeder:**

Finally, after everything about breeders good and bad has been written and debated, let's come down to exactly what makes a good breeder. What makes him stand out from the crowd? What encourages us to buy a pup from one breeder rather than another? What would qualify one buyer to check when faced with such important questions?

▪ **Skill and knowledge of breeder:** As you know, purebred puppies are not born out of a plastic mold in a factory, at the push of a button. Each one is as individualistic as we all are. So also, the knowledge and skill of a good breeder will make him see each pup as different from the others and distinct in his own way. His knowledge will have a huge bearing on the rearing of the puppy and how he eventually shapes up as an adult. You must remember that the puppies your breeder has are not the same as those owned by other breeders.

Your breeder must essentially know the traits and qualities of the breed you want. In his interactions with you, he should be able to match pup with owner on the basis of your temperament and that of your pup. Such breeders are worth buying from.

Also, ask your breeder why he chose to breed this particular type of dog. If his answer is convincing, then that will inspire you to trust him. For instance, if he said, "I was impressed by its character, temperament and its ability to handle the environment he's

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in.” But if he gives you a vague answer like, “I like the way they look,” or “Just for the money”, you know you should be seeking another breeder’s advice. Also, if he trips over your question, get out and find someone else to help you.

▪ **Track record:** As in any profession, one’s track record is a good indicator of a person’s ability and dedication. In fact, just as a stud dog’s offspring is an indicator of his worthiness, so also a breeder’s list of accomplishments can prove his worthiness.

What are the breeder’s accomplishments? If all that he can say for himself is to provide you with certain number of litters he has supervised, then that quantity may be his goal or target, not quality.

Really, it’s a buyer’s market when it comes to choosing a breeder. So, if you want a dog for obedience, go to a breeder who has been successful in producing this kind of dog. Similarly, if you want one for conformation, go to a breeder who specializes in this. Of course, just as you may want a combination of these two, you will find breeders who combine both talents successfully.

You need to ask your prospective breeder just how many litters he has bred. This is so because in order that he receives a license, the AKC demands that he breed at least four litters. Besides, it takes four litters for one to get a complete understanding of the breed. And it is only by trial and error that you know the difficulty of breeding specific traits into your dogs.

Perhaps you may be introduced to a breeder who demands that from time to time, he exhibits his dogs in conformation shows or obedience trials. Such a breeder is unafraid of “proofing their progeny.” It only means that your breeder wants to improve his skill and his breed on a continuing basis. By getting outside and independent opinions of his dogs, he puts his breeding program to the test. Without such a test, how can he judge the efficiency of his breeding program? Indeed, competition does make for better dogs!

▪ **Five-year dedication:** Often, breeders and exhibitors stay in the business for just five years. This is usually because this line is difficult and disappointments are many and money-related. So, disappointed breeders are quick to opt out of the business. Novice puppy buyers should look for a breeder who has several years of experience to back up their breeding program. You need to be wholeheartedly dedicated and love what you do to sustain heartbreaks and see success in time.

Dedication gives breeders the understanding that they cannot make a quick buck in this business, but that by persevering, they can weather any career storms and appreciate the monetary gains they will make eventually.

By dedicating themselves to the breed at hand, breeders see their breed as they really are. Once a smart breeder puts in his time and money into this business, he sets himself a goal that he wants to achieve.

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▪ **Goals:** If a breeder sets a goal, he provides a focus to the job at hand. If a breeder has a vision of what he wants to produce, he will do it if he is consistent at his work. If your breeder is consistent in progeny, he proves that he has planned a good breeding program. Of course, sticking to a vision brings success in the long term. So, look out for a breeder who works to a goal. Being a puppy machine is not what makes a breeder!

▪ **Champion dogs' breeder:** Is the number of champion dogs that come out of a particular breeder's kennel a good indication of his expertise? Can he, in fact, be your breeder?

Certainly not! Responsible breeders breed few litters, perhaps one in two years. This is necessary as it gives them sufficient time to see how each pup grows, so he can invest enough time and interest in its breeding program. If you approach a large-scale breeder, you will find that he does not have enough time to plan and execute a well-oiled breeding program—only because he needed to breed a whole lot of dogs to claim many champions! But no matter what he does, your interest in a breeder is for his quality, not quantity.

▪ **Is your pup socialized?** Usually, poodles from large-scale breeders are raised in kennels, so are less likely to be as well socialized, as you would want yours to be. Therefore, they are equally prone to health problems. As with all large-scale operations where the accent is more on commercial gain than being a labor of love, breeders are not overly concerned with providing their pups with the best veterinary care (pre- and postnatal) in order to cut overheads and increase profits. It is pretty clear then, that money here is more important than the quality of the dogs. Would you really like to pick up your pup from here?

Having said this, is it right to think that all dogs bred here are in fact pedigree champions? With just a few examples as exceptions, it is true that responsible breeders breed only champions. The champions here are of superior quality and worthy of breeding, and are fortunate to be impartially evaluated by many AKC judges. For this reason, every responsible breeder is very interested in showing his champions.

What to ask

▪ **Is your telephone interview a deciding factor?** Your prospective breeder actually “grilled” you on the phone. But can you base your choice of breeder on this?

Yes, say experts, this is a very important basis! Step back a bit and think whether he grilled you as much as you did him? A good screening procedure would be to see if he asks you a lot of personal questions only to ascertain if the pup he has reared will get all the love and attention he needs, and whether you are ready to take in a high-maintenance dog and all the other responsibilities of dog ownership. Also remember that if your prospective breeder takes his time to answer all your questions to the best of his ability, while also volunteering other related information, he's really the breeder for you, because this means you can rely on his help and advice on puppy care.

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If you want to test a prospective breeder for his honesty, ask him questions about health problems related to the pup you're interested in buying. These could be something like: Do you know how some of this puppy's ancestors died? This could sound trivial, but if in reply, you hear something like "Old age," then look for another breeder.

Even you know that all dogs die of cancer, autoimmune disorders, heart disease or liver disease, among others. A good breeder knows that all breeds suffer such problems, so he will be specific when he answers you. He will tell you that your pup's parents died of cancer or liver disease or what-have-you. Luckily the breed you've chosen—the poodle—has comparatively fewer genetic problems, so your breeder would have to choose from conditions like PNA, von Willebrandts and hip dysplasia. And even then, if the breeder did have one of these problems, he should be able to explain how he prevents that disease from recurring.

▪ **And what if you have a surly, uncommunicative but well-known breeder?** You don't choose him, regardless. No, certainly not. Part of the steep price of the pup is the breeder's knowledge, tips, advice and experience. So, in a sense, the breeder's expertise is part of the deal. Some first-time owners need help and advice with ear-setting, grooming or proper feeding from breeders. But if your breeder does not like to answer any questions you put to him at the stage of considering a particular pup, then he's hardly likely to show any enthusiasm or real assistance after you buy the pup from him.

A conscientious and responsible breeder will immediately put you in touch with someone who can groom your pup and sets its ears and will be happy to give you a progress report of your pup. This is why those who know the business usually advise, "Choose your breeder like you would your therapist." The rule of thumb is that if you don't like your breeder or don't gel with him instantly, neither is he capable of being a good breeder to you nor is his pup going to give you lasting satisfaction. Now, what do you want to do?

▪ **Should you ask a couple of breeders for their opinion on the breeder you're considering?** You could ask, sure, but the business is so competitive that anyone out there would be only too willing to pull someone else down. It's a dog-eat-dog world out there (no puns intended!), so it's better if you go by your gut instinct.

Secondly, by asking their opinions about your prospective breeder, you are really inviting them to tell you anything they think that can pass off as their professional opinion. These could be negative to begin with or could be downright lies. How would you know what the truth is? So, it would be more in your interests to ask this question of someone who has no axe to grind, someone impartial yet respected by the pet industry, such as a knowledgeable non-breeder, an owner of a puppy, or a breeder who is not selling pups these days.

So what if this person lives across the country from you? Surely you can think of going over to a dog show in his city and ask a few breeders there if they are familiar with the breeder in question. The breeder society is so close-knit that if your breeder is good and has a particular standing in this community, someone out there is bound to know him.

▪ **Should you choose your breeder on the basis of his desire to show or co-own pups?**

It is true that good breeders invest time, money and effort into breeding a better strain of poodles, so that they may show their stock and earn championships and high rankings in the breed, and in other categories. If your prospective breeder has many potential show-quality pups, then naturally he would like to show them. To show one's pups and win is proof of the breeder's knowledge and skill, on the one hand. On the other hand, it is a gift to the breeder community to be able to admire a beautiful poodle of show quality in the show ring. But if you're looking for a pet and don't want to show your dog, make this known to your breeder.

By co-ownerships, what we mean are making common agreements between buyers and sellers of show dogs. These agreements allow breeders to win awards from their dog clubs for its achievements and accomplishments. By means of an agreement, you will also give your breeder future breeding rights to the dog, or give him the privilege of showing it himself.

If you are seriously considering taking in a show quality pup, you will obviously be looking at co-ownership, you must insist on a written contract and ensure that you thoroughly understand its conditions. If the contract contains certain obligations or responsibilities you don't agree with, let your breeder know so that you can either change those particular clauses or you could negotiate with him on them. Remember, your breeder has much more to gain from this than you, so play your cards well.

However, there are certain pitfalls in a co-ownership that you must beware of. For instance, beware of co-ownerships that retain a breeder's breeding rights but do not mention anything about showing the dog. You must know by now that reputable breeders generally breed only champions—not dogs that managed to do well.

One more thing: please don't make the mistake of signing a contract that requires you to breed your pup, regardless of it being a champion or not. There are unscrupulous breeders who sell only to get a "puppy back." Such breeders work on a self-serving "puppy pyramid scheme" by encouraging backyard breeders who have no wish to improve their working style and infuse honesty in their work. So, beware of them too.

▪ **A contract even if you don't show or co-own? Here's the real picture:** If you've decided not to show or co-own, why sign a contract? For your own protection, you should sign a contract. Besides, a puppy contract is one sure way of ensuring that each of the two parties in question understands its expectations and responsibilities and those of the other.

➤ **What a contract means for the breeder:** A contract, to the breeder, is a paper clarification that the conditions of sale are designed to protect the future of the puppy. The breeder would expect normal humane treatment and veterinary care for a pup he's handing over to you. This would include spaying or neutering your pet, register it with

the AKC, to inform him of a change in your address, and to notify him in case you cannot look after the dog.

➤ **What a contract means for you:** For you, a contract means a paper clarification of your responsibilities as a new puppy owner. Further, it spells out your breeder's responsibility to provide you with a healthy dog, give you a full report of its temperament, the appropriate registration forms and medical records. The contract will also speak of your poodle's pedigree and the breeder's guarantee to take the pet back in case you are unable to look after it.

What you need to remember is that a puppy contract is a contract or understanding between two parties. But it is certainly not a "license to sue." If a verbal agreement is an oral understanding, this one is the written version of the former. Its function is to avoid and anticipate problems, solve them if at all they do occur, and to honor commitments made by both parties that have been spelt out in writing. Buying and selling a pup is serious business and often, ridden with litigation.

▪ **Should you ask questions related to the poodle's temperament and that of its parents before you decide which litter to choose from?**

➤ **Dog aggression:** You could ask your prospective breeder about dog aggression. This trait is common among all dog breeds—one that can be remedied with training and neutering. If we are to judge our pets largely on the behavior and temperament of their parents, then it is essential you know just how that little pup there behaves when he is challenged. Will he, like his parents, stand firm when challenged or will wait to pick a fight? If it makes a difference to you, you need to ask now and base your judgment on it.

➤ **Energy levels:** Next, find out about its energy level. While most breeds are very physically active, there are those that border on the hyperactive. Which category does the pup you like belong to? While you are bound to love having a pup with boundless energy, your kids may be driven crazy by it. See where you stand, and look for a compromise.

➤ **Obedience training:** You must also find out about the extent of obedience training your pup requires. If a dam or sire of your prospective pup has earned an obedience title, it could mean that they are only too eager-to-please—a trait that can easily be passed on to the litter. Of course, it could also prove that the breeder is specially committed to training his pups well.

➤ **All about socialization:** Ask your breeder how the pup in question and his parents behave with crowds and with strangers. Some pets are wary of people and overly protective of their owners. Then, there are those that are overly and thoughtlessly friendly. Between these two extremes, there are perhaps hundreds of temperament types you could consider for your pet. So, give it some thought before you state your preference.

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- **Temperament testing for your pup:** The hallmark of reputable breeders is to have their litters “temperament tested” when they reach seven weeks of age and present a written report on individual puppies. One kind of temperament test is a Puppy Aptitude Test (PAT), which measures the pup’s social attraction, dominant and aggressive tendencies, social dominance or submissiveness, and his independence.

- **Health tests for the parents:** Ensure that both parents of the litter have OFA ratings of Fair, Good or Excellent. Then, there’s the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals that evaluates x-rays of your poodle’s hips and elbows to see if he suffers from hip or elbow dysplasia—both inherited degenerative bone diseases. The OFA also renders preliminary evaluations on x-rays of dogs if they’re under two years of age, often about 90% accurate.

Also ensure that both parents were registered with the Canine Eye Registration Foundation (CERF) within the last year. This will prove that the parents of your pup were examined for their vision by the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists and found to be free of any genetic eye disease.

The parents should also be tested for von Willebrand’s disease (vWD) and Factor IX deficiency (inherited blood clotting abnormalities) and hypothyroidism (a common endocrine disease).

- **Is the sire and dam “PNA clear?”** Steer clear of breeders who tell you that their pups are “PNA clear.” This is because there is still no test conducted to determine whether a pup has inherited a disease of the nervous system that affects pups aged two to six months called Progressive Neuronal Abiotrophy (PNA). What he should have said to you, if he was completely honest, is that all his pups have ever had this problem. On the rare occasion that your breeder did face this problem, again the onus is on him to be truthful enough to tell you exactly how he solved this problem.

You should also steer clear of breeders who guarantee the health of their pups. No breeder can ever guarantee the health or long life of any of his pups, even if he has conducted all the tests possible, carefully planned their litters, physically examined each pup by a vet and more. This is because breeding is an imperfect science with no guarantees.

- **Should you buy a pup whose parents had a cyst?** You needn’t refuse to buy a pup whose parent has had a cyst at some point of time. This is because cysts, whether those of the epidermis, dermis or sebaceous gland, are very common among poodles, as they are soft-coated and hardly shedding breeds. These cysts are benign but can rupture and turn infectious, and so are best surgically removed by a vet.

If you want to measure the seriousness of the cyst, a good way to look at it is to consider the number of cysts and the age of the dog. If a dog is covered with cysts, the problem obviously lies in his bloodline. It may also prove that the breeder is neglectful about giving his dog adequate and timely medical attention, and is therefore unreliable.

Still, good breeders are difficult to find: When people read an advertisement given by a breeder in a dog magazine, they don't know what to look for. They continue to wallow in their ignorance when they speak to the breeder on the phone and when they visit the breeder at his home to inspect his farm and see his pups. So, it's not surprising that they end up buying pups incompatible with their temperaments and lifestyles, from perhaps, an unknowledgeable breeder.

Irresponsible and ignorant breeders are more than a dime a dozen, and since they work from a standpoint of ignorance, rather than breed pups, they breed a whole lot of health and temperament problems among purebred dogs. For this reason, it is necessary that you learn to recognize them and avoid dealing with them.

❖ **What to ask your prospective breeder:**

▪ **Have you been breeding pups for long?** You need to know just how much experience and knowledge your breeder has about the breed you're interested in taking home. You also need to know if he is in this business in the long term or short. If you feel he's experienced and knowledgeable, it's important for you because whenever you need help and advice, you'd go back to him. Also, be careful you don't find a breeder who has little experience but a lot of advice to give freely. This is because a breeder can only offer advice based on his experiences, minimal as it may be. Not always will this help you.

▪ **Do you have a few references I can contact over the phone?** A good and committed breeder should be able to give you at least 10 phone references. This is very easy for a good breeder since most puppy owners will want to discuss their pets with you. These phone references are very important to research your breeder. Whereas a breeder can lie, references will not and if your breeder owns a website, he may write up anything that will make you respect him. If you can get more than 10 references, the better for you, but if you cannot get through to a few people on the list despite repeated calls, you should understand that it is probably a phony list. Or, if you get through to them, but they give your unsatisfactory answers, look elsewhere for your pup.

Can I get a written guarantee? What is the guarantee for? All good breeders give a written guarantee against congenital or hereditary defects for at least the first year, sometimes two. The guarantee your breeder gives you should ideally be for a refund or a replacement puppy. The guarantee per se is not a measure of the breeder's professionalism, but certainly his ethics in the guarantee are. If you have an ethical breeder, he will refund your money if he disagrees with you, not if he is unethical.

▪ **Do both parents of these pups belong to you? May I see both of them?** You will need to see both parents in person so that you get an idea of how your pup will behave and act as an adult. You will get to see the full size of your pup too. When you go particularly to see the puppies, don't accept a lame excuse that the father isn't available because "he is out for stud service." Don't fall for that one because it means that either the father is not a purebred and that will be apparent to you the moment you see him or

he is ill tempered or ill. Further, if you see both parents, you will see that the pup is really their offspring.

When you go particularly to see the parents of your pup, don't accept a lame excuse that the father isn't available because "he is out for stud service." Don't fall for that one because it means that either the father is not a purebred and that will be apparent to you the moment you see him or he is ill tempered or ill. Further, if you see both parents, you will see that the pup is really their offspring.

▪ **Are there any health-related issues we need to talk about?** Perhaps you don't know that greedy breeders usually breed disabled, blind and ill dogs. They're in this business only for the money and share no concerns about the adult dogs or their health problems, particularly if they are hereditary. Sometimes, pups develop congenital or hereditary problems. If they are born to parents who are ill, their immunity is that much vastly reduced against life threatening illnesses. Therefore, for you to know that the dog you're considering is of healthy stock is of paramount importance. In fact, if you know the health background of the adult dogs for several generations, it is a confidence-building measure for you, since you will then know that your pup will grow up into a healthy adult.

Your breeder should know all the illnesses of the breed and should also be able to share these with you—whether hereditary, congenital or just a fluke. One more way to tell a fake from a genuine buyer is when he tells you his pup is of "100% healthy lines". "Lines" refers to the ancestors of the pup for the past four generations as well as those pups being born now. So, this means that the breeder guarantees perfect health of the ancestors of the pup you're interested in for the past four generations. That's guaranteeing a lot!

▪ **Where do you raise your pups?** You need to know if the breeder raises his pups in a clean and warm environment with all the comforts of home. You also need to be reassured that he socializes them. If you're dealing with a good breeder, he will bring the pup outside to start housetraining before you accept it. This will be a real advantage for you, as your efforts to houstrain him will be greatly reduced.

▪ **Where do you keep your adult dogs? Have you socialized them too?** If your breeder keeps his adult dogs in kennels away from the normal daily routines of a home, he will not be in a position to speak about their true personality, temperament and health. All he can confidently speak about is how these adults behave when living in a kennel and away from a home environment. So, for him to speak about your pup's personality or temperament will not be possible. Further, dogs in kennels cannot be socialized as well as one who lives in a family with the sights and sounds and activities related to a home and family.

▪ **What can you recommend I do to spay and neuter my pup?** If you're with a good breeder, he will want to educate you on the advantages of spaying and neutering your pup. He will tell you to spay your male pup as early as possible, at about four months of

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age, while females can be spayed at age five months. This is healthy for them and they make better pets.

- **Can I see snaps of some of your other pups?** You need to see exactly what the breeder calls a good dog. Ask for good photos of dogs, particularly if you're seeing them on the net.
- **What average size do your puppies grow up to be?** The breeder should be able to answer this one confidently, in fact, for this too, you could ask him for references.
- **Do you dock your pups' tails and remove the dewes? If no, why not?** If your breeder docks his pups' tails, it is definitely for the sake of cleanliness around the butt and tail area, so that he is well groomed and because it looks good. Your breeder will dock both parents' tails.

Its dewes are a nail on the ankle and really quite useless to the pup. If it is not removed, it will continue to get caught in cloth or lawn grass or anything else, injuring him and causing him a lot of pain, perhaps leading to emergency surgery. Usually, the tails and dewes are done when your pup is barely three days old. The pain can be minimized if these are done correctly, giving rise to very little pain and no bleeding whatsoever.

Steer clear of those breeders who do not dock or remove dewes. They may tell you they don't think it necessary to put the animal through any unnecessary pain, but really some breeders do not do this, as they do not want to spend the money paying the vet for this job. But they believe that it is more hygienic to remove the pup's tail and healthier to remove the dewes, so they go in for that.

- **How many breeds or mixed breeds do you normally breed?** Personal attention to each dog becomes difficult when the numbers increase. If your breeder has a huge line-up of dogs in kennels and each of a different breed, you know immediately he is not an expert on either a mix or a specific breed. Time and experience are required to be truly well-versed with the subject. If your breeder produces more than two or three mixes or breeds, he is a careless breeder and is in the business only to make money. But a good breeder is usually very dedicated to the breed or mix that he is making.

Though caring for his dogs may be prohibitive to a good breeder, still a good breeder will never sacrifice proper caring for easy money. Even after a sale is concluded, the breeder's help and advice continue throughout the dog's life, a responsibility that he willingly and happily accepts without any monetary expectations.

Also, please remember to ask your breeder for a copy of the documents showing your pup's pedigree and explain why they selected the bloodlines they used. He will then allow you to see and select pups and their parents.

- **And what's your responsibility?** As a prospective poodle buyer, you should make sure you ask to see the results of x-rays, blood tests, eye examinations and punch skin

biopsies for the sire and the dam of the puppy in question. A responsible and conscientious breeder will usually screen all breeding stock for hereditary health problems for which testing is done prior to taking in any dog in a breeding program. He will also be only too happy to answer any questions about the health of the puppy's parents.

In the event that the parents of the pup you select are found to be disease-free, still that does not mean your pup is free from specific hereditary health problems or that he will not develop any in future. No one can give you such a guarantee, but still buying a puppy from a breeder who tests breeding stock pretty seriously only increases your chances of getting a healthy puppy.

❖ **What a good breeder will ask you:**

A responsible breeder truly cares just where his pups grow up. Until he can place his pups in good and caring homes, he will continue to keep them with him in the best of medical and sanitary care, and will question any prospective buyers very closely to gauge if he is really capable of looking after his precious pup.

A good breeder usually asks these questions:

- Have you owned a dog before this? If so, which breed was it?
- How long did you have it?
- Do you have little children? How many? How old are they?
- Do you live in a house or apartment? If an apartment, are dogs allowed in the building?
- Do you have other pets too?
- Is your yard fenced?
- Do you exercise? Does this involve brisk walks to trips to the gym? How often do you exercise and for how long?
- Do you plan to give your pup obedience training?
- Do you know how much it costs to maintain a poodle—there are costs of veterinary care, including spaying and neutering, purchasing a good quality dog food, boarding the dog when you are away, annual license fees, etc.?
- Are you aware that taking in a pup means taking on the responsibility of another living creature that will, while it lives, be dependent upon you?

Can you answer all these questions, positively, honestly and to the best of the breeder's expectations? Even if you do, bear in mind that there are experienced breeders who have a sixth sense and so can tell if you're genuine or not. They will not only scrutinize your behavior with their dogs, the dogs' behavior with you, and the behavior and attitudes of your children. If you have unruly and disobedient kids, your dog could also grow up with these traits, something the breeder may not want. This may lose you the chance of taking a good pup home. So, watch it!

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