

QUESTIONS FOR DOG BREEDERS

- How many years have you been involved with this breed?
You're looking for someone dedicated to the breed, not someone who's breeding whatever is currently popular.
- Why are you involved with this breed?
Similar to above.
- Are you a member of the breed's national club?
Similar to above.
- How many litters of this breed have you produced?
Gauges breeding experience.
- Do you produce litters of other breeds? Why?
Again, looking to determine why they are breeding dogs.
- How many dogs, and what breeds, do you have living with you besides these puppies?
Too many dogs could indicate an inability to nurture and interact with every dog.
- What activities besides breeding are you involved in with this or other breeds?
Involvement in activities such as showing, obedience, agility, etc. demonstrates dedication to dogs; not just to breeding for profit.
- Why did you select this pair for breeding?
Looking to see if they understand furthering the breed's traits and characteristics. Accidental breedings should be a red flag.
- Where is the mother? How old is she? Where is the father? How old is he?
Assuming the puppies are still young, the mother should be with the puppies. She should be at least 2 and less than 8 years old. Anything younger violates the code of ethics of every national breed club. Anything older should come with an explanation of why and documented clearance from a veterinarian. Same issues for the father. You will want to meet at least the mother to gauge temperament and physical characteristics. It's even better if you can also meet the father, although this isn't always possible.
- Do the parents have recent OFA, CERF, or other certifications?
OFA certifies hip quality, CERF certifies eye health. Not guarantees, but something that more reputable breeders will have available.
- Can you provide a pedigree chart for the litter? Is the litter AKC registered?
Reputable breeders will be able to provide you with this so that you can see lineage. Watch for excessive in-breeding. AKC registration is the only proof of purebred status.
- How many litters has the mother produced? When was her last litter?
Make sure the mother isn't being used as a puppy factory. She also should have skipped a season between litters; i.e. – litters should be about 14-18 months apart. If not, there should be veterinarian documentation as to why a season wasn't skipped. There are valid reasons for it, but it should be uncommon and documented.

- Where are the puppies being kept?

Socialization is extremely important and goes beyond just being around other dogs. If you're going to keep your dog in the house, they need to know how to live in one and deal with things like vacuums, televisions, doorbells, etc.

- Where can I see the puppies?

Ideally, this should be at the breeding and/or living location so that you can see conditions. If the puppies are kenneled, the breeder should not hesitate to let you see that location too.

- If kenneled, are you licensed? Can I see your license and recent inspection documentation?

Not an issue for kenneling 2 or 3 dogs at a home, but if kenneling lots of dogs you want to ask about this.

- Can you provide documentation of vaccinations?

Reputable breeders will get the puppies started on their vaccinations. They will also take care of any necessary surgery; e.g. – dew claw removal, tail docking, etc.

- When will the puppies be available?

Never before 8 weeks of age.

- Will there be a sales contract? What are some of the contract stipulations?

There should be a robust contract covering everything from breeding constraints to returns to health guarantees to pricing, etc.

- What guarantees are provided?

Again, while health and genetics can't really be controlled, reputable breeders will stand behind their litters. The contract should cover results of an initial veterinarian visit by the Buyer, freedom from potential genetic defects common to the breed for one to two years, and specify compensation (return, refund, replacement, first pick from a subsequent litter, etc.).

- Will you provide ongoing assistance in understanding the care of these puppies?

Reputable breeders will want to answer your questions for the lifetime of the dog.

- Will you provide assistance if I can no longer keep the puppy?

Again, reputable breeders will insist on this, likely wanting first right of refusal.

- What are you charging?

Price can tell you a lot. Good quality dogs from reputable breeders are expensive. Remember, you're buying a "family member" that will be a part of your life for at least 10 years. Charging less than \$500 is a red flag, and probably indicates a puppy mill. Breeding is expensive and time consuming. Charging so little means they're probably making it up in volume. Charging less than \$1000 is a potential concern depending upon the answers to the other questions. Might not be a puppy mill, but could be just a "backyard breeder" that knows little about breeding.

- What questions do you have for me?

Reputable breeders will have an equally long list of probing questions for you.