

# Puppy Smart: A Guide to Responsible Breeders



## FACT: The Majority of Dogs Surrendered to Shelters are Between 7 Months and 1 Year of Age\*

Every year, thousands of puppies and dogs become ill or are abandoned because they did not begin their lives and/or were not placed with proper care. Many people unknowingly buy sick and under-socialized puppies from disreputable breeders and pet stores. The result is both human heartbreak and animal suffering. It is costly - emotionally and financially.

Part of Homeward Bound's mission of rescue is to reduce the number of unwanted animals. Along with a commitment to spay and neuter, educating ourselves and others about responsible breeders can make a tremendous impact on reducing the number of animals left homeless each year – and the tens of thousands trapped in inhumane practices like puppy mills.

While we strongly believe adoption is still the best option, we understand that many people want purebreds and puppies. By guiding those who choose to buy, we have the best chance of helping the greatest number of dogs and people.

Anyone can create a pretty website and brochures. Please don't be persuaded by marketing materials. The proof of a reputable breeder is in your one-one-one interactions with them.

This information has been compiled from a number of respected resources. You can make a world of difference simply by reading and sharing. If the "Does Not's" describe your seller, please avoid them!



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*Responsible breeders want to educate and screen potential buyers/adopters and provide follow-up support after the purchase or adoption. Responsible breeders take lifetime responsibility for the animals they have bred.*

## A Responsible Breeder:

**DOES:** Insist on meeting you and your family in person. This is the most important step you can take to make sure you're getting a great puppy. Reputable breeders NEVER sell their beloved pups to strangers.

**DOES NOT:** Sell puppies over the internet; arrange to ship the puppy to you or meet you in a parking lot or other public location to exchange money for the pup.

A seller asking you to make a business transaction in a public place is highly suspect. Reputable breeders want to check you out and protect their puppies. They would never ship one on a potentially traumatic flight or by freight truck to a stranger.

Reputable breeders want you to meet and spend time with your potential puppy. Meeting your puppy will help ensure that he does not have any existing health or behavior problems and that he's being raised in a clean and appropriate environment. If the seller won't let you visit, it's likely they are hiding something. Don't fall for excuses like "We don't want diseases brought into our kennel." This is a sure tip off that they may be hiding unsanitary or otherwise unacceptable conditions.

**DOES:** Raise the puppies in the home, not a kennel. They will happily invite you to see where the pup has been raised.

**DOES NOT:** Raise puppies outside or in a kennel or discourage you from visiting.

Your pup is going to live in a home, so he needs to be socialized to life in one from day one. That way, he can become familiarized with all he'll encounter in daily life: people, sights, smells, and sounds. Puppies that grow up separated from people - like in a garage, basement, or outdoor kennel - don't get the exposure they need to grow into friendly, outgoing companions.



**DOES:** Ask lots of questions about you, your family and how the puppy will be cared for and raised. They will also freely offer references.

**DOES NOT:** Skip questions about you, your family, or your lifelong commitment to the pup or appear unwilling or unable to provide references.

Reputable breeders want to get to know you. They'll ask you about your family, if you rent or own your home, who will be caring for the pup, etc.

**DOES:** Happily and proudly introduce you to the parents of the puppies. By meeting the parents - or, at the very least - the mom - you will get a sneak peek of the adult your puppy will become.

**DOES NOT:** Prevent you from meeting the dog parents, or at least the mother.

If the mom dog isn't on the premises, the seller may be buying the puppies from puppy farms and shipping them in.

# Puppy Smart: A Guide to Responsible Breeders

**DOES:** Socialize the puppies to people, places, and things.

**DOES NOT:** Raise the puppies without exposure to people, places and things.

Socialization is positive exposure that helps pups respond normally to everyday situations for the rest of their lives. It is absolutely critical that a puppy has been well-socialized. Make sure your future pup has been exposed to men, women, children, and household and real-world environments. If this isn't done, the dog is at risk for serious behavior problems.

**DOES:** Have a veterinarian individually examine and vaccinate each puppy and has verifiable proof of this. Knows about the breed's dispositions to certain genetic problems and has the dogs tested for them. Does provide a pedigree prior to purchase so you search the OFA database for health certificates (details below).

**DOES NOT:** Have missing or inadequate proof of vaccinations, examinations, or screenings for inherited disorders performed by a licensed veterinarian.

Proof of veterinary care is NOT a vaccination schedule with dates written on it by the seller. This is a common way sellers will deceive puppy buyers. True proof is paperwork from a licensed veterinarian. All puppies should have been vaccinated and examined by a licensed vet and you should be provided with paperwork that details the results of the exams.

All purebred dogs are at risk for genetic problems that are common in their breed. Reputable breeders are very aware of this and have the parents and/or puppies tested to ensure they are not creating dogs that will suffer. Verifiable proof of the results of these tests should be available.

The Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to research and prevention of orthopedic and hereditary diseases in companion animals. OFA has the largest fully searchable online canine health database in the world, with over 1,000,000 records. Each dog (or cat) who has ever had an OFA certification issued can be searched by name, part of name, or registration number. Results automatically include all OFA certifications for that dog, plus sire, dam, siblings, half-siblings, and offspring. Visit: [www.offa.org](http://www.offa.org).

For Golden Retrievers, you will find information regarding the most common health concerns and screenings here: [www.grca.org/health/bigfour.html](http://www.grca.org/health/bigfour.html).

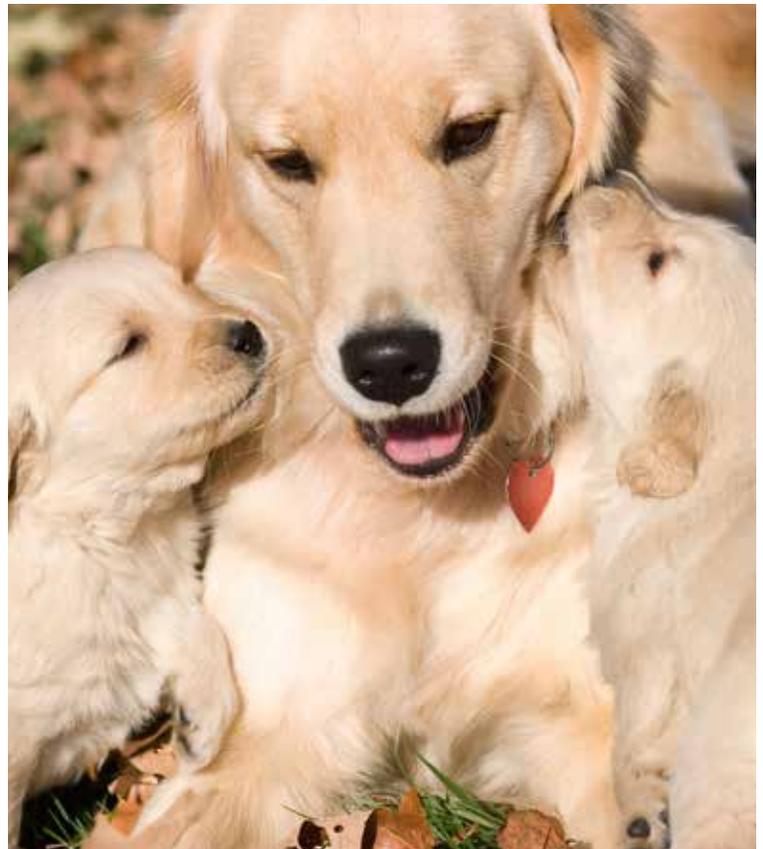
We encourage you to learn more about the health issues in your particular breed.

**DOES:** Have active associations with local and/or national breed clubs, breed activities, agility training, dog shows, etc. They show a real interest in the breed other than selling dogs and abide by the breed club's Code of Ethics. A reputable breeder is able to knowledgeably answer all of your questions – and welcomes them.

**DOES NOT:** Sell multiple breeds of dogs and have little interest in the breed. Note: referencing the AKC does not make someone a reputable breeder.

**DOES:** Guarantee that they will take their pups back at any point in their lives demonstrating a lifelong commitment to the puppies and to you. Any reputable breeder will take a puppy back into their home at any point in its life if you can no longer keep it. A life-long commitment to each and every puppy produced is a sign of a reputable breeder.

**DOES NOT:** Commit to taking a pup back after a certain length of time or at all. Reputable breeders commit to their pups for life.



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## About USDA licensing:

If your seller's credentials are that they are licensed by the USDA and/or has many breeds available, this is a huge warning sign that the seller is a puppy farm. The USDA regulates livestock production. Puppy farms regulated by the USDA are supposed to meet the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) standards of care. However, dogs and puppies housed in total compliance with the AWA are still not getting what they need to be healthy in body or mind. "Accepted husbandry practices" are agricultural practices for raising livestock on a FACTORY farm. They are not appropriate for raising puppies to be family pets.

## About Puppy Farms/Puppy Mills

A puppy farm or mill is commercial dog-breeding facility in which the health of the dogs is disregarded in order to maintain a low overhead and maximize profits. They can be "state-of-the-art" with hundreds of kennels, or look like the stereotypical puppy mill you see on the news with neglected dogs living in filthy, dilapidated cages. Both are inhumane, contribute to pet overpopulation and cause countless breeder dogs lifetimes of suffering in squalid conditions.

When puppies are housed and raised in crowded, unsanitary conditions without socialization they become ill and develop behavior issues. What's more, their moms are caged and bred repeatedly until they develop medical issues and are no longer of use.

When you purchase a puppy without using care to identify a reputable breeder, you contribute to this "industry" and the misery of hundreds of thousands of animals.

## Resources:

- [www.grca.org/allabout/a\\_find5.html](http://www.grca.org/allabout/a_find5.html) - Golden Retriever Club of America; a resource for education about the breed and referrals
- [www.offa.org/](http://www.offa.org/) - Dedicated to the health and welfare of companion animals through a reduction in the incidence of genetic disease with searchable databases by pedigree
- [www.pupquest.org/index.php](http://www.pupquest.org/index.php) - An educational website produced by animal professionals with over 40 years of experience in veterinary medicine, education, dog training and shelter work
- [www.westminsterkennelclub.org/dogshows/rightdog.html](http://www.westminsterkennelclub.org/dogshows/rightdog.html) - Find the right breed match for you and your family
- [www.nopetstorepuppies.com/](http://www.nopetstorepuppies.com/) - ASPCA education regarding Pet Stores and Puppy Farms/Mills

\* *National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy (NCPPSP)*

## Pet Shops Support Puppy Farms/Mills

Pet shop puppies are from breeder farms and puppy mills. No reputable breeder would EVER sell puppies to a pet shop. Puppies are typically kept in cramped quarters, are not socialized, are often ill or carry diseases. They are typically shipped to pet stores in trucks like livestock.

No – not every single puppy in a pet store is sick. But when you support pet stores, you support puppy farms and puppy mills. Your good intention of "saving this one" actually encourages the continued practice. The fastest way to stop the sale of puppies in pet stores is to simply stop purchasing – and to spread the word.

## How to Find a Reputable Breeder

You can find responsible breeders by asking for referrals from your veterinarian or trusted friends, by contacting local breed clubs, or visiting dog shows, obedience and agility trials. Visit the AKC Calendar of Events for events in your area: [www.apps.akc.org/apps/events/search/index.cfm](http://www.apps.akc.org/apps/events/search/index.cfm). If you are interested in a Golden Retriever puppy, you can visit the Golden Retriever Club of America for referral information here: [www.grca.org/allabout/puppyreferrals.html](http://www.grca.org/allabout/puppyreferrals.html)

Remember - always personally visit a breeder before buying a puppy. See for yourself where your puppy was born and raised and follow the guidelines above. Doing the right thing does take time and commitment. By investing the time upfront, you'll thank yourself for the rest of your dog's life – and you will be helping to address the issue of unwanted and abandoned dogs everywhere.

