

## **WARNING SIGNS**

- \*Never buy a puppy from someone who offers to bring the puppy to you or to meet you enroute.
- \*Never buy from a third party seller (meet the actual breeder and see the puppies with their mother)
- \*Be on the lookout for a *stooge* mother. Some breeders will collect puppies from a puppy farm and bring them into a house with an adult dog which is not the real mother. This may be obvious from the way the dogs behave with each other.
- \*Do not buy from a breeder who says they have mislaid the health certificates and /or pedigree.
- \*Do not let your heart rule your head! Do not take your children on an initial visit as this will make it far more difficult to make a rational decision.

## **The Cost of your Puppy**

Finally a gentle reminder of how much caring for your new family member will actually cost. The initial outlay when buying a puppy has rocketed in recent years, with purebred dogs costing anything between £500 -£2000 depending on the breed and crossbreeds anywhere between £200-£1000. However there is far more to consider than their daily food intake.

Make sure you have considered;

Flea and worm control,

Toys and Bedding,

Vaccinations, Neutering and Dental care (not covered by insurance)

Dog training/Puppy Classes

Doggy day care for when you are at work, and Kennels for when you are on holiday

Grooming

Insurance (usually higher for a pure breed due to increased incidence of breed related problems, higher for a large breed, and particularly high for a brachycephalic –short nosed- breed due to increased incidence of serious lifelong problems)

When added up over the lifetime of your pet you may be surprised at how many thousands it adds up to.

We want you to enjoy your dog and we want your dog to have a long and happy life. We believe this starts with the decisions you make when you decide to buy a new puppy. The right dog in the right home is one of the most rewarding experiences you can have and brings so much health and happiness to your family. Please take the time to do your research. Choose the right dog for you, and buy from the lovely people out there who adore their dogs and care about the homes they go to.

Useful websites:

- [www.thekennelclub.org.uk](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk)
- [www.breedinformationcentre.org.uk](http://www.breedinformationcentre.org.uk)
- [www.puppycontract.org.uk](http://www.puppycontract.org.uk)
- dogbreedheath.com – a fantastic site to help you chose the right breed for you.
- thepuppyplan.com - great advice to help you socialise your new puppy
- dogbreedingreformgroup.uk - a great website dedicated to improving dog welfare and helping you make the right decisions.

# Buying a New Puppy?



As a veterinary practice, all too often we see the problems that can arise from choosing the wrong breed or buying from the wrong breeder, and we would love to be able to help you avoid these problems before they are presented in our consulting rooms.

It's all too easy to make a wrong decision in the heat of the moment which lasts for the lifetime of the dog if you haven't thought it through carefully and done some research. There is also an escalating problem of unscrupulous breeders breeding dogs in poor welfare conditions and even importing puppies from other countries to supply the demand for some breeds. Hopefully these pages will give you some food for thought and start you on the right track to your perfect puppy.

## Which breed is right for you?

Historically, most breeds were the result of selective breeding for certain traits which meant they were good at specific jobs, be it herding sheep, hunting rats, searching and retrieving game, guarding houses, etc., and consequently they will have a strong drive and enjoyment from these jobs. However some of these traits don't always fit into every family environment.

These days most pet dogs are not kept for these purposes and people often make their choice based on looks rather than what that dog has been bred to do. This is the main reason for an awful lot of behavioural problems, frustrations and unhappiness for both the dog and the owner. For example high energy, intelligent breeds such as collies and spaniels need to have lots and lots of exercise, consistent training and mental stimulation, and in the right home they are the most wonderful trainable companions. If they are in the wrong home they can easily become nervous, neurotic and destructive through no fault of their own.

Important considerations are; How much exercise can you give your dog? How much training can you give your dog? How much space have you got? How much grooming are you prepared to do? How house-proud are you? (Some breeds may come with large amounts of drool, slobber and hair!).

Then give some scrutiny to the physical characteristics of your chosen breed. Please be aware that extreme physical characteristics almost always come with welfare problems for the dog as they are essentially a deformity of the naturally evolved healthy dog shape.



For example, excessive wrinkled skin (e.g. Shar Pei / Basset Hounds) or folded skin due to facial shape (Bulldogs / Pugs) frequently results in fungal and bacterial infections of the skin, and serious eye problems where poor eyelid shape and excess skin causes rubbing of hair against the eyes.

Excessively long backed dogs (Dachshunds / Bassets) are more prone to disc trauma resulting in paresis or paralysis of the limbs.

Excessively short noses (brachycephalic breeds such as Pugs, French Bulldogs and English Bulldogs) are perhaps responsible for the most serious welfare concerns resulting in massively restricted airways and protruding eyes. The snoring and snorting which is considered normal and even cute by many is the first indication that breathing is being obstructed, and at worst results in severe exercise intolerance and respiratory distress. Hyperthermia can also be a problem as these dogs struggle with their normal temperature control. Many of these breeds also have such protruding eyes that they are unable to blink effectively making them prone to severe non healing eye ulcers, and eye trauma. We also see a lot of dental problems as the size and number of their teeth remains the same but they have much shorter jaws. The meteoric rise in popularity of these breeds has resulted in a lot of unscrupulous poor breeding, to keep pace with demand which has resulted in a huge increase in skin allergies, food intolerances and orthopaedic and spinal cord disorders. If you have set your heart on one of these breeds make sure you have found a good genuine breeder who is committed to improving the health of the breed, and can provide health scheme certificates for the parents (more on this later). We would also strongly advise you get your puppy insured!

If you have fallen for a very specific breed, consider that all pure-bred dogs are the result of intensive inbreeding which does naturally expose certain genetic problems, making many breeds more prone to certain health problems.

For example the German Shephard is prone to hip problems, the Cocker Spaniel the disorders of the immune system, the Westie to skin allergies, Cavalier King Charles to heart problems. The lists are extensive!

The Kennel Club is very committed to try and reduce these problems through specific health schemes to try and ensure the healthiest dogs are bred from. However genetics is very complex and many problems may not be apparent until after breeding age, so eliminating these problems may not be straightforward.

[dogbreedhealth.com](http://dogbreedhealth.com) is a fantastic website summarising each breeds characteristics, frequently reported diseases, available health schemes and DNA tests available.

[www.the-kennelclub.org.uk](http://www.the-kennelclub.org.uk) is a great resource for researching individual breeds ([www.breed-informationcentre.org.uk](http://www.breed-informationcentre.org.uk)) and also for looking up breed health schemes and kennel club assured breeders. It is well worth a look particularly if you want a pure bred dog.

Cross breeding to reduce extreme characteristics and to provide a healthy mix of genes, from a veterinary point of view is an excellent idea, and for a pet dog you are giving yourselves a better chance of a happy healthy dog. You can also benefit from the positive characteristics of more than one breed whilst reducing the less desirable behavioural and physical problems of some pure breeds. It is no accident that the majority of vets have cross-bred dogs by choice!



## Finding the right Breeder

Sadly there are a flourishing number of unscrupulous breeders benefiting from the rise in demand of popular breeds, and also a growing number of puppies being imported to supply demand.

The results are poor welfare for mothers and puppies, poor health of puppies both short and long term, and potentially poor socialisation and behavioural problems. If you are about to part with a lot of money, make sure you are giving it to a good breeder who genuinely loves their dogs, and that you are not funding the growing problem of profit driven breeders who have no regard for the health and welfare of the dogs. You may think it's easy to identify these breeders, but carefully crafted internet adverts can cleverly disguise these sources and not being aware of the danger signs can easily fool the unwary so read on.

First try if you can to find a local breeder. This will allow you to view the puppies and handle them 2 or preferably 3 times before taking your chosen puppy home. It will give you a chance to assess the mother and (possibly) father for temperament and health, the importance of which should not be underestimated. All pups are cute and adorable but you need to see how they are likely to turn out as adults.

Multiple viewings make it extremely unlikely it is puppy farmed or an imported pup. It also gives you the chance to see if your pup is used to a home life similar to your own, e.g. the sights and sounds of vacuum cleaners, washing machines, children, cats, etc. All of this goes a long way in having a rapidly settled and relaxed puppy in its new home which will impact on its early health and future behaviour. More than one viewing also allows you to think rationally about your decision away from those endearing puppy eyes, which are near impossible to resist if you are making an on the spot decision, even if you know things are not looking ideal. If the breeder will only allow you to view your pup on the day you are collecting it, be patient, and find a different breeder. Remember you should **always** be able to view the pups with their mother.

When you view the pups they should be lively, curious, confident, clean, and robust. They should not appear scared or subdued, look ribby or pot-bellied, have fleas, skin sores or areas of baldness, or any old urine or faecal staining. There are no excuses for pups with any of these problems no matter how confidently an "experienced" breeder may explain them away. **IF IN DOUBT WALK AWAY**. No matter how much a pup in poor condition tugs at your heart strings. Giving your money to breeders of puppies in poor condition will only fund the problem.

The breeder should be asking you a lot of questions about your lifestyle, the kind of home the pup will be going to, your experience with dogs, and providing you with a lot of advice about the character and requirements of the breed, general puppy care and socialisation, and lots of personal information about the mother.

They should have wormed your pup at 3, 5 and 8 weeks, have microchipped and vet checked your pup at 8 weeks and be able to provide you with dietary details and a week's supply of their current food. If you want to make changes to their diet this will allow you to do it gradually.

If you are buying a purebred pup make sure you have checked for recommended health schemes (dogbreedhealth.com) or ([www.thekennelclub.org.uk](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk)) and expect to see certification of health for the parents.

To empower puppy buyers and help avoid irresponsible breeders, the RSPCA and BVA have developed the "puppy contract" which is a great help in asking the right questions ahead of your decision. This can be downloaded from [www.puppycontract.org.uk](http://www.puppycontract.org.uk) . On this website there are also useful links to useful health, socialisation, and behaviour pages.