

Kennel Club

Gathering Place of the Dog Fancy

These articles have been posted here to assist breeders in their efforts to produce healthy litters. To the general public we would like to say, the dog breeding and exhibiting world is devoted to the production of the healthiest puppies, in mind and body, that is possible, given the state of the art. And, the state of the art is progressing rapidly, with genetic testing for inherited defects already available, in some cases, and soon to be available in others. As a veterinarian, I am occasionally upset by the depiction in the general press of breeders exploiting their dogs, and uncaringly producing puppies with genetic defects. Nothing could be further from the truth.

However, there are also people who produce puppies who are not "BREEDERS AND EXHIBITORS". Uncaring puppy mill operators who sell to pet stores, and careless back yard breeders do not qualify as true DOG BREEDERS. If you'd like to read more on this subject, visit the [The KENNEL JOURNAL](#) pages, where additional topics of interest to the Dog Fancy can be found. When people are bred as carefully as we breed our dogs, human kind will have made progress, indeed!

WHAT IS A 'BREEDER'?

I apologize for the impassioned tone of the following piece, but it was in response to an e-mail from a person who objected to my comment that fortunately there aren't a great many Pulik bred in back yards. It was apparent that this individual had no concept of what I think of when I refer to a 'Breeder'. Most breed clubs have a code of ethics, but as a veterinarian I deal with all sorts of "breeders": with back yard breeders, who may not actually be puppy mills, with individuals whom I consider to be 'Breeders', and with a very few people who verge on being a better class of puppy mill than those we see on TV exposes. I wrote the following in the heat of the moment.

How do you define a 'Breeder'? I will use the extremes to compare here: a 'Breeder' is a person for whom it is more important to perform a specific breeding of one special 'right' dog to a specific bitch, rather than a person who will breed any male of the same breed to their bitch in order to produce puppies. A Breeder doesn't breed at a specific time of year for better puppy sales. A Breeder breeds for him or her self, because they are breeding to an ideal and not the "market". A Breeder may hold onto the puppies for longer than 8 weeks so that they are certain they have made the right 'pick' of which puppy to keep or to sell as a show dog, and by definition as a breeding animal.

A Breeder goes through absolutely hellacious torment every time a puppy is shipped by air. A Breeder makes you justify just why you think you deserve a puppy. On the other hand, a non-breeder, in the case of the worst puppy mills, breeds any dog which looks like it may belong a certain breed to whatever specimen of the same breed they can pick up. A non-breeder doesn't choose the 'best' male for a given female. A non-breeder 'lets nature take its course' rather than doing everything within their power to ensure that the mother and the father, and eventually the puppies, are healthy, so that the breeding will be successful, so that it won't seriously affect the health of the mother, and so that the puppies will be robust and healthy. A Breeder will perform all necessary tests to ensure that the mother and father of a litter are genetically healthy, and free of inheritable diseases to the best of their ability to check.

A Breeder will only register puppies with the correct pedigree. A puppy mill will use any set of 'papers' they can get their hands on, and which may not actually be the true pedigrees of the sire and dam. A Breeder will stay awake and with the litter for as many 24-hour days as are necessary to insure that no puppy is lost to 'fading puppy syndrome', or is squashed or misplaced by the new mother. A non-breeder will 'let nature take its course' - again.

A Breeder will handle every puppy several times every day, and help supplement the puppies feeding if necessary to save excessive drain on the dam. A Breeder will chart daily weights on the puppies, and identify each puppy in some way, so that they can keep track of each puppy's rate of gain, so a puppy which is falling behind the others can be supplemented.

A Breeder will give the expectant mother Breyers Ice Cream, or pickles and peanut butter, if they are requested, and will sleep with her on their pillow, to reassure her she is special. A Breeder will stay home from work for as many days as necessary, in order to whelp the litter, help the bitch, and get the puppies off to a good start. A Breeder will supply the mother with a whelping box which keeps the mother and the puppies comfortable, and gives them a feeling of protection and safety. If the bitch chooses, however, she is allowed to begin the whelping process on the Breeder's own bed, and to move to the whelping box once anxiety cools and the bitch is ready to keep at her job in another location. A puppy mill simply 'harvests' the puppies from wire bottomed cages like rabbit hutches when they appear to be about the age of consent for the airlines.

A Breeder will skillfully interview all applicants for adoption, and will provide the new puppy owners with a healthy, well adjusted, well vaccinated and wormed puppy. I know I could go on about this for a couple more pages, but the impression I want to give, is that breeding a litter and whelping and raising and placing puppies entails tremendous sustained effort, education, money and a good knowledge of applied genetics. It is anything but a casual undertaking. A breeding undertaken without this kind of effort may produce healthy, sound puppies, or it may not. One has no way of predicting, since the deck wasn't 'loaded' as good Breeders try to arrange it.

After selling the puppy, a good Breeder will follow up with all needed assistance to the new owner. A Breeder will be prepared to take a puppy or adult dog back into their own home if needed - for whatever reason. This means that a good Breeder must be able to provide for an extra dog or two at a moment's notice, and inconvenience isn't an admissible excuse. A good Breeder considers him or herself the "parent" of a puppy from birth to grave. The responsibility

for bringing new puppies into the world includes making certain, to the extent possible, that these puppies will go on to have happy lives, and never become homeless. All contracts for puppy sales must include that any transfer should occur through the breeder, or be approved by the breeder.

The bumper sticker proclaims that "A Puppy is for Life", and that's true, for both the buyer and the breeder. While 'back yard breeders' may not be guilty of the sins of puppy mills, neither are they, by definition, cognizant of the procedures and efforts necessary to earn the title 'Breeder'