

IT MIGHT *NOT* BE A RESPONSIBLE, ETHICAL DOG BREEDER, IF ...

by Maggie Blutreidh, CPDT

None of us intend to patronize a commercial enterprise, operated strictly for profit, where dogs are a harvested crop, where quality control is not an issue. We dog lovers hope to find a healthy, properly socialized dog or puppy of a breed that suits our lifestyles. When headlines about disreputable, unethical breeders grab our attention, "Dogs and Puppies Rescued from Filthy Pens!" or, "Seven pups and Their Mom Found Frozen!" we wish for guidelines. Here are a few things to keep in mind.

IT MIGHT *NOT* BE A RESPONSIBLE BREEDER, IF ...

- you ask, "Why did you breed this litter?" and do not get an answer that indicates extensive knowledge of the breed's conformation standard and general needs
- puppies are let go before the age of seven or eight weeks
- no one asks how **you** intend to house and care for the dog or puppy
- there are **no** firm criteria for the homes taking the dogs or puppies
- the dogs are "used" **only** for breeding -- never entered in sanctioned, independently judged competitions like conformation shows or obedience, agility or hunting trials
- the person is not a member of any national breed or regional all-breed club
- **results** from testing sire and dam for genetic problems common to the breed in question are not available or have not been conducted
- **no questions are asked** about dogs you own, both past or present.
- no one seems interested in past references from your vet
- you are not encouraged to check out multiple references from veterinarians and those who have previously bought dogs or puppies
- answers about how often the female is bred, how old she is, and how many puppies she has produced are in large numbers
- the contract you sign does not specify terms of health or return policy
- the contract you sign does not include **your** responsibilities toward the dog or puppy
- only a selected few of the dogs or puppies on site are available for you to actually see, others are "off limits"
- registration paperwork is **not** available at the time of purchase
- paperwork is from a registry that has few criteria or gives certification to breed mixes
- complete medical records for the litter and adults are not **immediately** available
- **pedigrees** of several generations on both sire and dam are not immediately available
- a three generation pedigree has no "Ch." preceding or any title initials following any of the names
- the dog or puppy is being offered by a third party -- not the breeder of the litter
- several breeds and/or mixed breeds are offered for sale
- "rare or unusual" colors, sizes or other features are being touted
- "Will ship," or "Will ship anywhere," is part of a fairly slick advertising promotion
- dogs/puppies are for sale through the internet or ads in the classified section of a newspaper
- the place takes credit cards or demands cash only or requires cashiers' check or money order prepayment in full
- the person in charge seems eager for you to cuddle the puppies or says things like, "That one really loves you!" or, "You are the first person he's ever gone to!"

Any single one of the above points does not necessarily indicate or define an unethical, irresponsible breeder. However, the more from this brief list that do apply, the more likely it is that you have contacted one.

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- none of the above red flags are waving
- you feel a lot like you are trying to adopt a child from the CIA!

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