Dogs Victoria Fact Sheet
Before you get a Dog

Questions to ask Your Breeder

DOGS VICTORIA
YOUR CANINE COMMUNITY

You have done some research, and now it is time to find a reputable breeder. Regardless of whether or not you have decided on a purebred puppy or a mix, you should be asking the breeder some important questions.

There are many fabulous, dedicated breeders out there, but there are also less scrupulous breeders, puppy farmers and scammers. Asking some key questions will give you an idea of the quality of your breeder, and help alert you to those breeders who are more concerned about turning a quick profit rather than producing happy, healthy, well-socialised puppies.

Dogs Victoria has another Fact Sheet in this series to help you spot Puppy Scams and Puppy Farmers, so please take the time learn how to protect yourself as you search for a new pet.

Questions to ask ***BEFORE*** you commit to a puppy

All puppies are cute and adorable, so before you go to visit a litter or see any puppies, it is a good idea to have a conversation with the breeder, and ask some important questions. That way, if something does not seem right, you can simply thank them for their time and will not feel pressured into taking a puppy home with you.

Choosing the right breeder can influence your entire experience of owning a dog. Below are some simple tips to ensure that your new family member has been raised in a loving and knowledgeable environment by a breeder who cares about the puppy's long-term welfare and not just a quick sale.

How often do you breed a litter?

Most reputable breeders will only have a few litters a year (most breed even less frequently). It is uncommon for a reputable breeder to have more than one or two litters at the same time simply due to the amount of time and effort required to raise and care for a litter of pups properly.

You may be lucky and contact them just after they have a litter, or you may have been directed to them as a breeder with a 'litter on the way' or 'on the ground' via a breed club. Outside of this, be wary of breeders who have lots of pups 'ready to go now', have pups of more than one breed available, or seem to have a lot of litters available.

What health issues affect this breed (or mix) and what health testing do you do?

All dogs, whether purebred or mixed, can suffer from health problems. Some of these health problems are hereditary, meaning they are passed on to puppies from their parents.

Genes that can cause disease are present in all animals – even humans – so be very wary of a breeder who tells you that their particular breed or mix is entirely free from health issues.

A reputable breeder will be able to tell you the health issues that have been recognised in their breed (or breeds in the case of mixes) and will be able to discuss what health tests are available to help screen potential parents before any breeding occurs. They will also be happy to give you a copy of the results of any tests.

Dogs Victoria has another fact sheet to help you understand the different types of Health Testing breeders may use to prevent hereditary disease in their breed.

Will I be able to meet the parents of the litter?

Temperament and behaviour are highly heritable. Meeting the mother of the litter, and if possible, the father will give you a good idea of how your puppy is likely to look and behave as an adult.

You should avoid puppies from overly timid parents, and those that show signs of aggression.

Note: *It is normal for the mother of the litter to be quite protective of her pups in the first few weeks, but there should be no signs of of anxiety or aggression if you meet her away from the litter.*

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Unless the pups are dirty or obviously unwell, you cannot tell anything about the conditions in which they were raised, or how the mother is cared for.

You should avoid breeders who will not allow you the opportunity to meet the mother of the litter (only showing you the cute, cuddly pups), or who continuously make excuses for why the mother is not there. This may be an indication that they do not want you to see the condition of the mother, or see how she is housed (a common strategy of puppy farmers) or may indicate someone who is a 'dealer' rather than a breeder.

Once the litter is born, will I be able to visit the mother and puppies?

It is usual for breeders to restrict visits in the first few weeks after birth to minimise disruptions that may stress the mother. Once the pups are a bit older, they will usually welcome visits from their puppy buyers.

Be very wary of breeders who do not allow visits in person, who offer to deliver the pup to you or meet you at a meeting point – these breeders may not want you to see how their animals are kept, or let you see the condition of their adult animals. Worse still, they may be puppy scammers, selling puppies that do not even exist!

Do you have any questions for me?

Most reputable breeders will want to ask you plenty of questions. Questions about your lifestyle, expectations, experience, and family make-up.

Good breeders want to ensure that the puppies they have raised are going to homes where they will receive all of the care, training and love they need and that each puppy is well matched to its new home.

If the breeder is only interested whether or not you are ready to buy and shows no interest in discussing the home you can provide, be very cautious.

What information will I receive with my puppy?

You should expect to receive quite a bit of written information when you purchase a puppy. There should be details of the parents and copies of both the mother and father's health testing results.

There should be plenty of information about the breed and its care, common health issues seen in the breed and what to look for and where to go to find more information. Finally, there should be copies of all of your puppy's health records – details of worming treatments, vaccinations and veterinary health certificates.

Good breeders will insist on you signing a contract that clearly outlines what should happen if the puppy was to become unwell after arriving at your home, develop a health condition later on in life, or what should happen if you could no longer care for it.

What kind of ongoing support do you offer?

Good breeders will want any puppy that they have bred to have a long and happy life. They will be glad to provide ongoing advice and support as your puppy transitions into your home, and as it grows into an adult. Good breeders want to receive updates, celebrate milestones, and hear of any health issues that might pop up.

Reputable breeders take responsibility for every pup that they breed and will be there for you throughout your puppy's life. Avoid getting a puppy from a breeder whose input ends at the time of sale.

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What to expect from Dogs Victoria Breeders

Dogs Victoria breeders have regulations they must comply with when breeding puppies in addition to their obligations under Victoria's Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act(1986) and associated Codes of Practice.

1. Any puppy advertisements(once the puppies have been born) must contain:

- A valid Source number issued by The Pet Exchange Register
- The Microchip number(s) of the animal(s) being sold
- The breeder's Dogs Victoria membership number
- The statement:

  "Please contact Dogs Victoria on email: office@dogsvictoria.org.au to verify my membership."

2. Dogs Victoria Registration certificate and parentage verification certificate for your puppy – these may not be available at the time you pick up your puppy due to the microchipping and testing requirements required prior to your puppy being registered with Dogs Victoria. Have a look at the Understanding the Registration Process for Puppy Buyers Fact Sheet for further information.

3. Breed Health Testing results for the parents of your puppy – results that will be provided will vary between breeds but may include eye testing results, hip and elbow scoring, RFG (BOAS) testing results and/or DNA health and trait results.

4. Puppy Pack containing:

- Information about your chosen breed
- Vaccination record and the due date of the next vaccination
- Responsible dog ownership information
- Records on internal and external parasite control
- Records of microchip number with a signed transfer of owner form
- A desexing certificate (if applicable)
- A written health declaration

5. Ongoing support once you have collected your puppy to answer questions and offer advice.

It doesn't feel right...

If you are not happy with the breeder's answers to any of your questions, or you feel something just isn't quite right, it is time to find another breeder.

It can be hard to walk away - especially if litters are few and far between – but purchasing from an unscrupulous breeder will only lead to heartbreak and expense.

You want your new family member to be happy and healthy, and to be part of your life for a long time…..so it will be worth the wait!



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