



Breeder Question Checklist

You are excited to get a puppy? Don't get puppy fever too quickly but ask the breeder some questions first! Use this list to determine if the breeder is following good general practices and the puppy is being raised in a manner that fits what you are looking for. If a breeder is unwilling to answer questions about their breeding program, litter or individual dogs, it may be wise to continue your search.

How old are the sire and dam of the puppies?

Many of the final health certifications cannot be done until the dogs are 24 months old. Review our page on health clearances for specifics on ages and recommendations for testing.

Do you do any special activities with the dogs? What are their personalities like?

The breeder may not show/work their dogs but asking this question may give you some answers about temperament. Example: If the dog is a Therapy Dog (visiting people for comfort) or is involved in truffle hunting or dog sports it can let you know about social traits and trainability.

Some countries require breeding dogs to complete specific temperament tests to prove suitability for breeding.

What health testing has been done on the parents? Are the results available online?

Some test results may not be available in online databases. The [OFA database](#) is a great start in your research in the USA & Canada. Most reputable breeders clearly list health results on their web sites or in litter announcements. It is important to ask for verifiable proof of testing (see the listing online or a copy of the certificates).

Below are the top health issues to check:

Each will have written certification documentation.

- Benign Familial Juvenile Epilepsy ([BFJE](#))
- Lysosomal storage disease ([LSD](#))
- Hyperuricosuria (HUU)
- Hips ([OFA](#) or [PennHip](#))

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- Patella Luxation ([OFA](#))
 - Eye Certification ([CAER](#))

Are there any other screenings that you have had done?

Examples might be: '[Furnishings](#)' gene which can affect the length/texture of coat, or tests for Thyroid, Heart, etc.

Do you sell puppies with a contract? *A contract for a puppy should include details that clearly state what the Breeder and Buyer are responsible for with regard to the puppy. Contracts vary and you should have an opportunity to review the contract before agreeing to purchase the puppy.*

- *Do you require spay/neuter for dogs sold as pets? If so, at what age do you require it to be done? There are studies that indicate spay/neuter prior to growth plates closing (about 1 year) to detrimental to the overall growth & health of dogs.*
- *Do you offer any health guarantees?*
- *Do you require a deposit? Is it refundable if you don't have a puppy for me or I change my mind?*

Can you tell me about how you raise the puppies?

Indoors House or Outside/Kennel? *Breeders use various setups for raising puppies. You should know the type of environment your puppy will be raised in. The first weeks of a puppy's life are very important to their overall development.*

Any specific puppy development activities? *This answer may vary but you should be looking for a breeder that provides various 'enrichment' activities and structure for the puppies in the first several weeks of life. Some examples include using [Early Neurological Stimulation](#) (ENS) with newborn puppies, following the [Puppy Culture Program](#) for enrichment or a breeder that creates a process they feel works best for their puppies.*

What age do you let them go to new homes? *It is generally recognized that puppies should not be removed from the litter before 8 weeks of age. There is evidence to suggest that puppies may go through a fear period between 8-9 weeks of age and breeders may choose to keep puppies until 9-10 weeks.*

Do you begin vaccinations on the puppy? *There are varying schools of thought on vaccination schedules. The puppy should have started the vaccination series before leaving the litter even if the Breeder recommends a limited vaccine protocol.*

Will the puppy have a vet check before going to new home? *Breeders should have a well-puppy check up on each puppy before they go to their new homes. At that time the veterinarian can check for heart murmurs, patella issues, and a stool check for parasites (if it was not done previously). If you are flying to get the puppy it will be necessary to have a Health Certificate for travel but even if you are not flying the puppy should have an exam.*

May I come visit your kennel or the puppies (if you live close enough)? *If you live close enough it would be great to visit the breeder before the puppies arrive to meet and discuss the planned litter. Breeders vary with how early they allow visitors with the puppies but you should expect to be able to visit at some point during the first several weeks if you are close enough.*

How do you decide which puppy goes to which home? When do you usually make the final decision?

This may really vary depending on the breeder and the potential homes. Breeders wanting to evaluate puppies for potential show prospects or deciding which puppy they might want to keep may choose to wait until 6 weeks for the final decision because that is the optimal time to evaluate structure in a puppy.

Breeders that use temperament or aptitude testing for evaluating puppies will do the test at 7 weeks. This type of evaluation can be a helpful tool to predict future behavioral traits as the puppy matures.

Do you ship the puppy or do I need to come pick the puppy up?

Don't be surprised if the breeder will not ship a puppy to you and as you are searching and figuring out the costs involved in a puppy it's a good idea to factor in a trip to pick the puppy up. This is actually a good idea because it gives you a chance to meet the Breeder, momma dog and puppy in person as well as seeing where the puppy was raised.

Do you offer any additional services or items with the puppy?

Several breeders offer training programs and provide items (list of supplies, puppy schedule, training clicker, crate, meds) that make the transition from one home to the next easier.

Depending on the answers to the basic questions above other questions may come to mind. If you choose to get a puppy from the breeder (and if the breeder has a puppy for you) this will be the start of a long relationship where you should be comfortable asking questions about training, behavior and health as your puppy grows.

If at any time you feel uncomfortable, pressured or are not satisfied with the responses consider continuing the search for the right breeder for you.