

A Guide to Breeding Your Dog

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A Guide To Breeding Your Dog

1 - Prepare Yourself for Breeding a Litter

Breeding dogs has been a passion for people through many centuries. Part art, part science, and total devotion, breeding is both exciting and challenging.

Breeding purebred dogs is also time consuming, expensive, and, occasionally, heartbreaking. If you go forward, your underlying purpose should be to improve the breed - not just increase its numbers.

Breeding a litter should begin with knowledge. Responsible breeders devote time to learning as much as they can about their breed, about canine health and training, and about AKC rules. How can you become an expert?

Study your breed standard. This is the official version of the "perfect" breed specimen and should be the starting place for any breeder. The AKC offers breed videos with real-life examples, and many parent clubs offer more detailed, illustrated versions of their standards for more in-depth research.

Attend dog events. Watch dogs in action and study the pedigrees of those you like. Ask questions of breeders involved in your breed. Research your breed by visiting the breed's national parent club website. Find and attend a local club meeting to meet other breeders.

Read, read, read! Your library and bookstore are invaluable sources of information about canine health and breeding. Some books, including the *Complete Dog Book* and *American Kennel Club Dog Care and Training*, are available in the AKC Store. The *AKC Gazette* and other dog magazines have informative articles about breeding as well.

Additional reading:

Advice from the Breeder: Considerations Before Breeding

By Mary M. Rodgers

Looking for a Book on Breeding? The AKC Library can help you find it.

By Theresa Shea, editor

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2 - Breed to Improve

The motto of the responsible breeder of purebred dogs is "Breed to Improve."

Every dog is the best dog in the world to its owner. Responsible breeders, however, know to avoid "kennel blindness" -- in other words, they take a step back and honestly evaluate the good and bad points of their dogs before making the decision to breed. The goal of breeding, after all, is to produce a better dog and a quality pet.

Examine your dog carefully. Recognize its flaws. If you decide to continue with the breeding process, look for a mate that will eliminate or balance those flaws. The national parent club for your breed may also provide assistance.

One of the best ways to get an objective opinion of your dog is to test it against others. Consider attending a dog show to determine how your dog measures up against the best specimens of its breed.

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3 - Understand the Commitment

Raising puppies is a full-time job. During the first couple of weeks the dam normally takes care of the puppies' needs, but complications, such as a dam with no milk or an orphaned litter, may arise. It is the breeder's responsibility to provide a safe, warm, dry place for the puppies and proper food and water for the bitch.

Puppies are even more work (and more fun!) when they are weaned. The extra feeding, cleanup, grooming, training, and veterinary care adds up to a lot of hours - and not much free time for you.

Another factor that you must consider is the financial cost of having a litter of puppies. From the genetic screening and health tests before breeding to the extra food, supplies, and medical care required after the puppies are born, the cost of whelping and raising puppies can be very high, especially if complications arise.

Responsible breeders make sure that their puppy goes to an owner who will provide it with the same love and devotion for life that the breeder has provided. This means careful screening and evaluation of each person or family interested in getting a puppy.

Responsible breeders learn everything they can about their breed and know all the pros and cons of ownership. It is important to share this information - including the negative aspects - with prospective puppy owners. You should be ready to explain why a dog requiring a lot of coat care or training may not be the best match for a workaholic or why a tiny dog may not be appropriate for a family with small, active children. You should be committed to placing puppies with owners who will provide excellent care.

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4 - Choose A Suitable Mate

The first thing to consider when choosing a mating pair is to ensure that both the sire (dog) and dam (bitch) are AKC registered. If both dam and sire are AKC registered, then the litter can be registered with the AKC.

When selecting a breeding partner (most likely a sire for your dam), there is a simple principle to bear in mind: mate animals that complement one another. Choose a dog whose bloodlines will strengthen your bitch's weaknesses and emphasize her good qualities. For example, if your bitch's coat is not as good as it might be, then find a partner with a good coat, from a line of dogs with good coats. Of course, practicing this common sense maxim can be very complex because you must weigh all the factors that contribute to the dogs' traits and appearances. This is an area where research and the advice and experience of other breeders are invaluable.

Two vital factors to keep in mind as you make your selection are temperament and health.

Temperament is a hereditary trait in dogs, although it can be influenced by other external factors. Selection over many generations eventually produced breeds with the correct temperament to pull sleds, follow scent on trails, or retrieve game. The inheritance factors of temperament are complex. However, you should never consider breeding a dog with a questionable temperament.

As far as health goes, you should be aware that dogs are subject to many hereditary defects, some of which are potentially crippling or fatal. If you breed, your goal should be to produce dogs that are not affected by the major known hereditary diseases occurring in your breed.

Additional reading:

Make Informed Breeding Choices with CHIC

By Theresa Shea, editor

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5 - Know Your Genetics

To be an effective breeder, you should have a basic understanding of the science of genetics. Everything about your prospective puppies' health, soundness, looks, and temperament will be determined by the genes passed on by their parents, and by their parents before them. Therefore, the selection of a mating pair should not be made solely on the basis of the dog's or bitch's looks (or temperament or soundness, etc.), but should be based on an understanding of how the animal's genes contributed to its looks and of how those genes are passed on and expressed. That is why it is essential to study the pedigrees of your mating pair. The more knowledge you have as you make your selection, the more likely you are to produce a litter with the qualities you desire.

You should also be well-versed in the genetic problems that affect your breed. Genetic defects can occur in any breed and can affect any system in the body. Some genetic diseases may occur in many breeds; others occur in only one or a few breeds. The following is a brief explanation of how genetic defects may be inherited and expressed.

Diseases that follow a *dominant* pattern of inheritance need only one abnormal gene. That is, if only one parent is affected, the condition will show up in each successive generation. Some individuals may be only mildly affected with the condition, making it difficult to detect. In such cases, the condition can mistakenly be thought to skip generations.

Diseases that follow a *recessive* pattern of inheritance occur in homozygous individuals, meaning dogs with two abnormal genes. Dogs with one mutant and one normal gene are heterozygous, and they are carriers of the condition. They appear normal but can pass the abnormal gene to their offspring. Recessive mutant genes can be passed through many generations before emerging in the offspring of two dogs that carry the same genetic mutation.

Polygenic disorders result from the cumulative action of a number of different genes. The exact number of genes involved and their individual functions are difficult to determine, and the pattern of inheritance tends to vary from family to family. Polygenic inheritance can sometimes mimic either dominant or recessive inheritance, and this feature may lead to erroneous conclusions regarding the type of underlying genetic abnormality.

Chromosomal anomalies -- defects in chromosome number and structure -- can also cause genetic diseases. Dogs normally have 39 pairs of chromosomes on which genes are located. Major abnormalities in chromosome number and structure can produce serious defects.

Whether you inbreed, linebreed, or outcross may have an effect on the incidents of genetic disease in the offspring. *Inbreeding* is the mating of two individuals that are related through one or more common ancestors. The closest form of inbreeding involves parent-child and brother-sister matings. *Linebreeding*, a form of inbreeding, usually involves mating more distantly related dogs. Typically these matings involve cousins (with one or more grandparents in common), nephew-aunt, great granddaughter-great grandson, grandfather-granddaughter, grandmother-grandson, etc. The rate of polygenic and recessively inherited diseases tends to increase with inbreeding, because the chance that the two animals carry the same mutation is greater when the dogs are related. *Outcrossing* is the mating of two dogs of the same breed that are otherwise unrelated.

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6 - Finalize Stud Contract

You have performed all necessary health checks, genetic screenings, and selected the perfect mate for your bitch. Now it's time to work out the details of the mating.

It is an excellent idea to work out a contract with the owner of the stud dog before breeding takes place. The agreement concerning stud fees should be in writing and clearly state all obligations and circumstances. The contract should be signed by all parties to the transaction, and each signer should receive a copy.

The stud fee is set by the stud dog's owner. The mode of payment may differ. The stud owner may request a cash fee, "pick of the litter," one or more puppies from the resulting litter, etc. The collection of the stud fee is the stud owner's responsibility. The contract may state that the owner of the sire is not obligated to sign an AKC litter registration application until the stud fee has been paid. Keep in mind that the AKC cannot settle disputes between individuals in regards to contracts and breeding arrangements.

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7 - Perform Pre-Breeding Health Checks

Good puppies start long before breeding ever takes place. Both parents need long-term care - what dog people call conditioning - to produce the best offspring. This means regular veterinary care, screening for genetic problems, pre-breeding tests, and regular exercise and good nutrition. Bitches should not be overweight and should have good muscle tone before breeding. Additionally, a bitch that is in good mental condition will make a better mother than a bitch that is insecure, snappy, or has an otherwise unstable temperament.

One month before breeding, the bitch should have a thorough pre-breeding physical examination by a veterinarian. Her vaccinations should be current, and she should be tested and treated for parasites.

You may also want to have the bitch and male tested for brucellosis, an infectious bacterial disease that can cause sterility or spontaneous abortion in affected dogs.

The age at which dogs reach sexual maturity depends to a large extent on their breed. Small breeds tend to mature faster than large breeds. On average, however, males become fertile after six months of age and reach full sexual maturity by 12 to 15 months. Healthy stud dogs may remain sexually active and fertile to old age. Adult males are able to mate at any time.

Bitches have their first estrus (also know as season or heat) after six months of age, although it can occur as late as 18 months to two years of age. Estrus recurs at intervals of approximately six months until late in life. During estrus, the female is fertile and will accept a male. The bitch should not be bred during her first season.

The bitch's cycle is divided into four periods.

- **Proestrus:** The bitch attracts males, has a bloody vaginal discharge, and her vulva is swollen. Proestrus lasts approximately nine days; the bitch, however, will not allow breeding at this time.
- **Estrus:** During this period, which also lasts approximately nine days, the bitch will accept the male and is fertile. Ovulation usually occurs in the first 48 hours; however, this can vary greatly.
- **Diestrus:** Lasting 60 to 90 days, diestrus is the period when the reproductive tract is under the control of the hormone progesterone. This occurs whether or not the bitch becomes pregnant. False pregnancy, a condition in which the bitch shows symptoms of being pregnant although she has not conceived, is occasionally seen during diestrus.
- **Anestrus:** No sexual activity takes place. Anestrus lasts between three and four months.

Keep in mind that AKC Rules do not allow, except with special documentation, the registration of a litter out of a dam less than 8 months or more than 12 years of age at the time of mating, or by a sire less than 7 months or more than 12 years of age at the time of mating.

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8 - Mating

Natural Breeding. Responsible breeders generally do not breed a bitch at the first heat to avoid imposing the stress of pregnancy and lactation on a young, growing animal. It is also customary to avoid breeding a bitch on consecutive heats to allow sufficient time for recuperation between pregnancies.

Most dogs are first bred between the 10th and 14th day after the onset of proestrus. As long as the bitch will accept the male, mating every other day for a total of two or three matings is generally considered sufficient. However, signs of proestrus are not obvious in some bitches. To catch the peak fertile period, a veterinarian may need to perform hormone tests or examine vaginal smears under a microscope.

Bitches are usually less inhibited by new environments so they are usually taken to the stud. Breedings involving young males proceed more smoothly if they are paired with experienced bitches. Sometimes human handlers must step in with assistance or guidance during breedings. Some breeds are more apt to need assistance than others because of anatomical considerations. Discussing this process with your own breeder will help you be prepared .

During breeding, the male mounts the female from the rear and clasps her midsection with his front legs. Rapid pelvic thrusts follow until penetration and ejaculation take place. After the pelvic thrusts cease, the dog and bitch will not separate for 10 to 30 minutes. Known as a tie, this results from a swollen section of the penis called the bulbus glandis. During the tie, the male may move around until he and the bitch are positioned rear to rear. Do not try to separate the dogs during the tie because it can injure either or both animals. After some time, they will part naturally.

Artificial Insemination. Artificial insemination is a relatively simple procedure that can be used when natural breeding is impractical. The AKC accepts registration of a litter mated by artificial insemination using fresh semen, fresh extended semen, and frozen semen, provided the proper procedures are followed. Registration of these litters requires DNA certification. For more information, see the AKC's rules for registering a litter bred by artificial insemination.

Additional reading:

Ovulation: Timing is Everything

By Katherine Settle, DVM

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9 – Pregnancy and Whelping Preparation

Watch for Signs of Pregnancy

Canine gestation lasts approximately 63 days. Signs of pregnancy include an increase in appetite, weight, and nipple size. However, a bitch with false pregnancy may also show these signs. A veterinarian can usually confirm a pregnancy through abdominal palpitation at 28 days or by using ultrasound or X-rays.

Once pregnancy is confirmed, you should talk to your vet about special feeding requirements and about what to expect during pregnancy, labor, and after birth. You should also be briefed on how to recognize and respond to an emergency.

Provide Proper Nutrition for your Pregnant Bitch

A bitch in good condition should continue into pregnancy with the same caloric intake that she had during adult maintenance. Her food intake should be increased only as her body weight increases, beginning about the last five weeks before whelping. Daily food intake should be increased gradually, so that at the time of whelping she may be eating 35 to 50 percent more than usual. As her weight and food intake increase, begin offering small, frequent meals to spare her the discomfort that larger meals can cause, especially in a small dog.

If you have been feeding your bitch a well-balanced, high-quality diet, you should not need to add anything to her food during her pregnancy. However, some breeders advocate supplementation with a protein source such as evaporated milk, eggs, meat, or liver. These supplements should never represent more than 10 percent of the bitch's daily food intake.

Accustom your Bitch to the Whelping Box

It is a good idea to build a whelping box well in advance so the bitch has time to become accustomed to it. Unless you have already accustomed her to a whelping box, she may choose your closet or another inappropriate place for a delivery room.

An ideal whelping environment is warm, dry, quiet, draft-free, and away from all other dogs when possible. Confinement and whelping location of your bitch is relative to her breed and size.

A good whelping box is roomy and has low sides so you can easily reach in. It should also have a small shelf or roll bars running halfway up along the sides so the pups have something to crawl under to avoid getting rolled on by the bitch. Many breeders prefer to line the box with newspapers until after delivery because paper can be changed quickly when it becomes soiled. After whelping, newspapers are typically replaced with non-skid bath mats, outdoor carpeting, or something else that provides better footing for the puppies.

Suggested Whelping Supplies:

Item	Usage
Newspaper	Bedding for bitch and puppies; line whelping box before, during, and after whelping
Bath Mats	Bedding for bitch and puppies after whelping
Clean Towels	Clean puppies during whelping
Paper Towels	Clean up the whelping area
Thermostat	Check bitch's temperature prior to whelping
Un-waxed dental floss	Tying puppies' umbilical cords
Heating Pad	Keep puppies warm. Be sure to make sure not too hot and cannot catch fire
Scissors	Cut puppies' umbilical cords or the placenta
Iodine	After umbilical cord is cut (either by bitch or breeder), clean puppies' abdomen

Be Alert for Signs of Labor

A few days before the bitch is ready to give birth, she may stop eating and start building a "nest" where she plans to have her puppies – if introduced properly, this should be in the whelping box you have prepared for her.

Shortly before whelping, the bitch's body temperature will drop to 99 degrees or lower (from a normal temperature of 100 to 102.5).

Approximately 24 hours after her temperature drops, she can be expected to enter the first stage of labor when the cervix dilates and opens the birth canal for the passage of puppies. At this time, she will pant, strain, and appear restless. This stage of labor is followed by actual abdominal straining and production of the puppies and placentas.

You should have on hand your veterinarian's phone number and the local emergency clinic.

Additional reading:

Not Too Hot, Not Too Cold:

zKeeping the temperature just right in the whelping room

By Darlene Arden

4 Keys to Good Litter Hygiene

By Loretta Marchese

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10 - Puppies are Born!

Most bitches give birth easily without the need of human help. Each puppy emerges in its own placental membrane, or sac, which must be removed before the puppy can breathe. The mother usually takes care of this by tearing off (and sometimes eating) the membrane and then severs the umbilical cord. After delivery, she will lick each puppy to stimulate its breathing.

You should keep track of how many placentas are delivered and ensure that the number matches the number of puppies because a retained placenta may cause problems.

You must take over if the bitch neglects to remove a sac or sever an umbilical cord. A puppy can remain inside the sac for only a few minutes before the oxygen supply is depleted. The sac membrane should be torn near the puppy's head and peeled backward until the puppy can be gently removed. Then you should remove mucus or fluids from the puppy's mouth and nose and gently rub the puppy with a towel to stimulate circulation. The umbilical cord can be tied with unwaxed dental floss and cut on the far side of the tie/knot about two inches from the abdomen. The cut end should be painted with iodine to prevent infection.

At the time of birth, the bitch will be busy cleaning her puppies, warming them, and allowing them to suckle. It is very important for the puppies to suckle soon after emerging from the womb. Suckling lets them ingest colostrum, a milk-like substance containing maternal antibodies which is produced in the mammary glands just after birth. Colostrum helps the newborn puppies fight infection in their early days while their own immune systems mature.

To track nourishment of the puppies, it is advisable to identify and weigh puppies during the first 2 weeks.

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11 - Consult Your Veterinarian if Complications Arise

If something goes wrong, don't hesitate to call your veterinarian for assistance. Signs of potential trouble include:

- Indications of extreme pain
- Strong contractions lasting for more than 45 minutes without delivery of a pup
- More than two hours elapsing between puppies with or without contractions
- Trembling, shivering, or collapse
- Passing a dark green or bloody fluid before the birth of the first puppy (after the first puppy, this is normal)
- No signs of labor by the 64th day after her last mating

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12 - Keep Your Puppies Warm, Fed, and Clean

Temperature. A newborn puppy cannot control its body temperature and must be kept in a warm environment. Chilling will stress the puppy and predispose it to infectious disease; overheating can kill it. The environmental temperature can be controlled with a well-insulated electric heating pad or a heat lamp. But make sure the puppies have a cooler place to crawl to if they become too warm.

The immediate environmental temperature should be kept between 85 and 90 degrees for the first five days of life. From the seventh to the tenth day, the temperature can be gradually reduced to 80 degrees; by the end of the fourth week it can be brought down to 75 degrees.

Nursing. The first milk produced by the bitch after whelping is called colostrum. Every puppy needs to ingest colostrum as early as possible after birth and certainly during the first 24 hours of life. Colostrum contains a number of substances that are beneficial to the puppy, including immunoglobulins that protect newborns from the infectious diseases to which the mother is immune.

For your nursing bitches, one thing to keep a look out for is canine mastitis. It is not that common, but you should be aware of it. Canine mastitis is a breast infection in bitches, usually occurring a few weeks after whelping. Normally, the breasts of a lactating bitch are warm and enlarged. If the breasts seem to be red, dark, hot, or painful when touched, then you should contact your vet immediately. Advanced canine mastitis presents itself as a hard, hot and almost black breast segment, which is extremely painful for the bitch when touched. Canine mastitis can be caused by weaning puppies too early, severe scratches from puppies' claws, or some other infection. A bitch with canine mastitis may be running a fever, be listless, and may not eat. She also may not allow her puppies to nurse, and if she does, she will be "snappy" when they touch the affected area.

Caring for your bitch after whelping

Some bitches eat very little for the first day or two after whelping. Then their appetite and need for all nutrients rises sharply and peaks in about three weeks. During this entire period, adequate calcium, phosphorous, and vitamin D must be fed to avoid the onset of eclampsia. Optimal amounts of these nutrients are already present in a high-quality diet so further supplementation is unnecessary. Eclampsia causes nervousness, whimpering, unsteady gait, and spasms. Although very serious, it is readily cured by prompt veterinary treatment.

After whelping, the bitch ideally should be about the same weight as when she was bred, but not more than 5 to 10 percent heavier. For three weeks after whelping, she will need two or three times more food than her normal maintenance diet to help her provide nourishing milk to her puppies. This food should be divided into three or four meals. The composition of the food should be the same as it was during the last third of her pregnancy; only the amount per day should change.

Care for Orphaned Puppies

Newborn puppies must be hand fed if their mother is either unable or unwilling to nurse them. Cow's milk is a poor substitute for bitch's milk, which is more concentrated and has twice the level of protein, almost double the calories, and more than twice the calcium and phosphorous content. For feeding puppies, a commercial puppy formula is recommended; carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Remember that puppies grow very rapidly so make sure you weigh them every day before you calculate how much to feed them.

You may need to start with slightly less formula at each feeding and gradually increase the amount as the puppy responds favorably to hand feeding. Steady weight gain and well-formed feces are the best evidence of satisfactory progress. If diarrhea develops, immediately reduce the puppy's intake to half the amount previously fed, then gradually increase it again to the recommended level. Diarrhea in newborns can be very dangerous so consult a veterinarian for advice.

Never prepare more formula than is required for any one day because milk is a medium for bacterial growth. Maintain sanitary conditions at all times. Before feeding, warm the formula to about 100 degrees or near body temperature. Using a bottle and nipple, hold the bottle at an angle to prevent air bubbles. The hole in the nipple can be enlarged slightly with a hot needle to let the milk ooze out slowly when the bottle is inverted. The puppy should suck vigorously, but should not nurse too rapidly. Consult a veterinarian if the puppies are not nursing well. You may need to resort to tube feeding, which is best taught by a health professional.

Newborn puppies must be stimulated to defecate and urinate after each feeding. Ordinarily the mother's licking provides this stimulation, but orphaned puppies will need human intervention. Gently massage the puppy's anal region with a cotton ball that has been dipped in warm water.

Gentle body massage is also beneficial for any hand-reared puppy. Massage stimulates the circulation and thoroughly awakens the puppy. Stroke the puppy's sides and back with a soft cloth. The best time for a massage seems to be when the puppies are waking up and you're waiting for the formula to get warm.

Additional reading:

Ensuring a Good Start: Newborn Pups Sometimes Need Nutritional Boost

By Arliss Paddock

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13 - Register Your Litter Soon after Whelping

One of your most important tasks as a breeder is to ensure that your litter is registered with the AKC. Registering the puppies creates a record of their place in the history of your breeding program and in the development of the breed. It also opens the doors for the puppies' new owners to the wide array of services, information, and events provided or sponsored by the AKC.

You should be able to provide the new owners with a registration application at the time the puppy is sold. Therefore, it is essential that you apply to register your litter promptly after the puppies are born.

There are two easy options for you to register your litter. You can register your litter online on AKC.org by going to [Online Litter Registration](#). When you register your litter online, you can get your litter kit in as little as two to five business days. Or you can download an application, fill it out, and send to the AKC.

Registering your puppies with the AKC is another way to give your puppies a great start in life. Additionally, it confirms for your new puppy owners that you are a dedicated and responsible breeder.

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14 - Wean Puppies from Their Mother

There are many rules of thought about weaning your puppies. Experienced breeders tend to use methods that work best for them and their respective breed. It is recommended that you contact your veterinarian to discuss a feeding regimen for your litter.

Most puppies begin the weaning process at about two to four weeks of age. Some breeders recommend starting them off by offering a pan of puppy formula in place of their mother's milk. Other breeders combine the puppy formula with some presoaked or grinded dry puppy food and/or baby rice cereal to create gruel.

As the puppies get older, most breeders start adding more food and decrease the amount of formula.

To avoid digestive upsets, be sure to introduce all changes in food or feeding schedules gradually.

Additional reading:

The First Seven Weeks: Raising Well-Adjusted Puppies

By Wendell J. Sammet

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15 - Sending Your Pups to Their New Homes

By this time you have learned everything you can about your breed, and you know all the pros and cons of ownership. It's important to share this information - including the negative aspects - with prospective puppy owners. You should be ready to explain why a dog requiring a lot of coat care or training may not be the best match for a workaholic, or why a tiny dog may not be appropriate for a family with small, active children.

A responsible breeder makes sure that their puppies go to good homes. This means careful screening and evaluation of each person or family interested in getting a puppy. Knowing the right questions to ask prospective owners helps breeders get a feel for the type of home they will provide. Some of these questions can include:

1. Why does the person or family want a dog? Why has the person or family chosen this particular breed?
2. Who will be primarily responsible for the dog's care?
3. Do you have the time to meet the demanding needs of the puppy/dog? Time for feeding, training and exercise?
4. Are there any children? If so, how old are they? How would they be instructed in the care of the dog?
5. Does anyone in the household have allergies?
6. Are the new owners committed to the grooming and health maintenance?
7. What is the potential owner's attitude toward training and obedience?
8. How often is someone at home?
9. Will they have time to walk and play with the dog?
10. Are the new owners prepared to register their new puppy with the AKC?

AKC Breeders have the responsibility to provide AKC registration papers to the puppy's new owners. This means applying for litter registration in plenty of time to supply applications to owners at the time of sale. You should explain the benefits of registration to the owners and help them complete the registration application. Conditions such as limited registration or co-ownership should be explained in full. You will also want to provide the new puppy owners with vaccination/health records, feeding instructions, health guarantees, return policy, any health or genetic tests, as well as a copy of the sales agreement/contract.

Commit Yourself to the Puppies for Life

For breeders, responsibility doesn't end when their puppies leave with new owners. Responsible breeders make sure their puppies' new families know they can turn to them with any questions or problems that arise throughout the puppies' lives.

As a breeder, you will be gratified by phone calls and letters describing your puppies' first teeth, birthday parties, and other milestones. You'll be thrilled to receive photos of a puppy's first show win or portraits with the puppy right in the middle of a happy family. But you will also have to be ready for bad news: a family splitting up and leaving the dog homeless; a vet contacting you about an unforeseen hereditary illness; a dog you thought would be a great obedience prospect biting a young child.

As a breeder, you will need to be there with advice and support for all these situations. Responsible breeders answer questions, provide resources, and assist with problems that may come up. Responsible breeders assist in re-homing or take in puppies should the need arise.

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16 - Encourage New Owners to Register Their Puppy with the AKC

Getting All Your Puppies Registered!

Before you sending your puppies to their new homes, be sure to inform new owners of their best source (besides yourself!) for information on sharing a long, fulfilling, active life with their new pet - **the American Kennel Club**.

The AKC is dedicated to providing service and support to the owners of purebred dogs. As a breeder, you can help us reach out to new owners by performing these simple steps:

1. **Give the individual registration application to the new owners and help them complete it properly.** Explain the benefits of registration and conditions such as limited registration or co-ownership. The application requires information and signatures from you and the new owners. Since the new owners may be unfamiliar with the form, you should see that it is properly completed as the sale is finalized.
2. **Emphasize AKC registration benefits.** When new puppy owners register their puppy with the AKC, they will receive more than \$100 in registration benefits!*
 - Frameable AKC Registration Certificate
 - Free introductory vet office visit, available with participating veterinarians in the AKC Veterinary Network
 - Complimentary 60-Day Trial AKC Pet Healthcare Plan*, worth \$45, providing coverage up to \$1,500 against accidents (from day one) and illnesses (from day 31) at absolutely no cost or obligation to the owner. Details will be provided soon after registration.
 - Free *AKC New Puppy Handbook*
 - Reduced rates for pet lost-and-found recovery service enrollment
3. **Encourage the new owners to submit the registration form to the AKC.** Many new owners incorrectly believe that the application is the dog's actual registration paper. You should explain that their dog is not officially registered until the form is submitted with the proper fee. Show them an example of a registration certificate so they will know what to expect back from the AKC.
4. **Indicate the importance of AKC registration.** Registering with AKC is good for owners and good for dogs. As a not-for-profit registry, AKC's commitment is to canine health, breeder rights, and promoting responsible dog ownership. AKC funds a wide array of activities and initiatives dedicated to our achieving our mission, including:
 - a. AKC Canine Health Foundation research to treat and cure dog-related diseases
 - b. Canine legislation initiatives that help protect breeder rights
 - c. K-9 search and rescue programs
 - d. Inspections to monitor care and conditions at kennels across the country
 - e. Canine DNA profiling that ensures reliable registration records
 - f. Education to encourage responsible dog ownership

Additionally, AKC sanctions more than 20,000 competitive dog events each year and provides support for AKC affiliates and programs, including AKC Companion Animal

Recovery, AKC Canine Good Citizen®, AKC Veterinary Network, AKC Library, AKC Museum of the Dog and much more!



New owners should be told that without an AKC registration number, their dog cannot be entered in dog shows, companion dog events, or performance events. They should be told that without an AKC registration number, any offspring of their dog (if breeding is a viable option) cannot be registered. Perhaps more importantly, they should be told that if they do not register their dog, they will be missing out on the wealth of information and services the AKC is eager to provide to the owners of registered dogs.

When they register, new owners are automatically included in an outreach program designed to enhance the dog-owning experience. The AKC will keep owners up to date on exciting dog events held around the country, on legislation affecting dog owners, and on advances and alerts on canine health.

Additional reading:

AKC Veterinary Network Certificate Program Helps Start Puppies on Lifelong Healthcare Plan

By Penny Leigh, AKC Internal Consultant and breeder of Flat-Coated Retrievers and Bearded Collies

The AKC Pet Healthcare Plan: An Invaluable Resource For Breeders To Recommend To Puppy Buyers

By Theresa Shea, editor