

Navigating your Options when Searching for a Purebred Dog

Bringing a new pet into your life is a wonderful, emotional, and often, life-changing positive experience. Adopting a dog might be your first choice, but what if you need a dog to have some predictable breed-traits? Or maybe you have your heart set on a particular breed. Does this mean you *have* to go through a breeder? No, it sure doesn't. You might have more options than you realize. There are reputable resources available to anyone looking for a purebred dog.

Where do I Start?

There are numerous agencies whose mission is to find homes for all types of pets, including purebred dogs.

- **Petfinder** is an online pet-searching service with a massive database. Their website includes purebred and mixed-breed dogs, cats and other pets from a multitude of adoption agencies, breed-specific and rescue groups throughout the U.S., Mexico and Canada. www.petfinder.com
- **Purebred Dog Rescues and resource groups** (Such as Seattle Purebred Dog Rescue) – look for non-profit status and ask for a vet reference or previous adopter reference etc.
- **Don't rule out seniors.** Many rescue groups who specialize in senior dogs have purebred dogs looking for wonderful homes. (Such as Senior Dogs of Oregon www.sdoregon.com)
- **Dog breeders** vary greatly in their professionalism and ethical practices. If you're determined to find a dog through a breeder, do your homework.

Finding an Ethical Breeder

Start your search by looking at a group dedicated to the breed you're interested in. For example, the XYZ Dog Club will have a breeder directory and within this is the *AKC Breeder of Merit*. These breeders have consistently demonstrated conscientious and responsible practices (prioritizing the health and socialization of their puppies) and a commitment to the breed. This is one way to locate a trustworthy breeder.

If the breed you're interested in doesn't have a dog club or you want to venture out on your own, here are some guidelines for choosing an ethical breeder:

- Will likely ask you more questions than you ask them.
- Will always take their dogs back because they genuinely care about each one.
- Will generally breed one breed of dog only.
- Will encourage or even require that you come see where the puppies have been raised (inside a home) and introduce you to the litter, the mother and, if onsite, the father. The area will be clean and any adult dogs you meet, other than the mother who may be protective, should be friendly, especially with the owner there.
- Will gladly give you references and ask you for references as well.
- Will put the puppy's and breed's welfare first.
- Will probably engage in activities (agility, skijoring, Nosework, etc.) with their *adult* dogs because they genuinely enjoy spending time with them.
- Breeds once or maybe twice a year and always with adult dogs (two years old).
- Will openly share health test results and vet records with you.
- Will be breeding out of a commitment to the breed and not to pay their mortgage.

- Won't ask you to meet in a random parking lot to exchange money for the puppy.
- Won't keep the puppies and adult dogs strictly outdoors or in a out building where they don't hear or see normal household noises and sights.

Buyer Beware

Truly ethical breeders care deeply about their dogs, the breed and maintaining their reputation for honesty and professionalism. Beware of those who may have started out with honorable intentions but have become dependent on the income from selling adorable puppies. Ask to see current vet records or for a reference from their veterinarian. Follow the list above to discover potential red flags.

Observe the environment and conditions where the puppies and Mom are living to get an idea of the care they've been given. Are the puppies in a clean and safe area inside the home where they have plenty of space to run around? Are there toys for them? Do you spot any hazards they could reach? Do they have fresh water and food available? Look for clues that will help you decide if this is a breeder who shares your priorities so you can bring home a healthy and well-socialized puppy or young dog.

What to Do if the Scenario Alarms you

If you're concerned for the welfare of puppies or dogs you visit, contact your county animal services or file an animal cruelty report through the **Oregon Humane Society**. <https://www.oregonhumane.org/report-cruelty/>
Multnomah County Animal Services <https://www.multcopets.org/investigations-field-services>
Clackamas County Dog Services <https://www.clackamas.us/dogs/investigation>
Washington County Bonnie Hays Animal Shelter
<https://www.co.washington.or.us/HHS/AnimalServices/AnimalControl/index.cfm>

Need help? Call our free pet behavior help line at (503) 416-2983.