

Swiss Run Greater Swiss Mountain Dogs

Quality Breeder vs. Backyard Breeders

Try to avoid puppy mills and backyard breeds...

We enjoy having a pet in our home and there is nothing wrong with wanting it to be a purebred dog. If there wasn't a market, puppy mills and backyard breeders wouldn't be producing puppies. They produce puppies because they can sell them and if they couldn't sell them, they wouldn't breed them. The vast majority of dogs should be spayed and neutered and the majority of people do not take the responsibility of breeding seriously.

The issue with puppy millers is not that they produce puppies, but that the care and quality involved in the process is lacking and that there is little or no attention to health, temperament or to appropriate home selection. Quality care and quality facilities should be the first step in a breeding program and the puppy millers fall short from the beginning of the process. When profit, current fads and numbers produced become the focus of the breeder rather than the care of the animals and the quality of puppies produced, you end up with poor care, poor conditions, and an overwhelming number of genetically unhealthy and temperamentally unsound dogs.

Backyard breeders on the other hand generally have good intention. They generally have a pet they love that is purebred and a reasonable representation of the breed. Through love they either intentionally breed or allow Mother Nature to take its course and the family enjoys raising a litter of puppies and those puppies (assuming they are raised inside and not in the doghouse) are normally well handled and socialized to a normal family household. Where backyard breeders fall short is not their intention, but in their lack of dog education. Without extensive research and dog education, breeding the average family pet to another average family pet quickly results in less than average offspring. Structural faults can become crippling and if the parents are not tested for genetic health issues, these issues get passed on to puppies unknowingly. If you purchase a dog from a backyard breeder, you are taking a complete gamble with what you get. There is a lack of knowledge of health, temperament, structure, guidance and selection when you purchase a puppy from a backyard breeder. You can indeed get lucky, but little about the decision is based on education and more often than not you end up with problems.

Without careful selection of breeding pairs, health issues, temperament issues and serious structural issues plague the puppies produced. Without a strong knowledge of the pedigree, problems surface and become serious issues for the puppy owner to deal with. Knowing the pedigree includes knowing what health

issues and faults the parents and grandparents have. Without serious evaluation of the puppies produced, puppies can end up in homes they are completely unsuited for and new owners are often faced with unexpected problems. Without breeder support, these new owners are then faced with the problem of what to do with the family pet that is so unsuitable for their family. This leads to pets being dumped in shelters, rehomed to whoever will take them, or roaming the streets. While there are dogs in shelters with problems severe enough to minimize their suitability for any home, the vast majority of dogs in shelters would make a wonderful pet for the right home. Dogs that end up in shelters are most often there because they were improperly homed in the first place with either a mismatch of personality (i.e. active dog placed with an inactive family, dominant dog placed with a permissive family), or mismatch of training ability.

The backyard breeder doesn't have bad intention; they simply have a lack of knowledge. The backyard breeder needs simply to become educated. Anyone can choose to breed their dog, but they need to take the time to educate themselves on their chosen breed, and objectively evaluate their much loved pet before they take that step to produce puppies. Dogs with temperament issues (i.e. shyness, aggression, extreme dominance or inability to cope) and dogs with health issues (crippling bone issues, chronic ear infections, digestive issues, allergies) should not be bred, regardless of how much their family loves them. Remember, if we don't take the time and effort to improve each generation, each generation gets worse. If your pet is so wonderful that it simply must be bred, then do the work to obtain health clearances and a solid temperament evaluation, and then work hard to locate the right mate, not just any mate, as the puppies inherit 50% of their genes from each parent. Select a mate that is of even higher quality so each generation improves. No puppy will be just like one parent, so be sure each parent is worthy of being bred. Careful evaluation of the puppies must occur at about 7-8 weeks old to be sure the right puppy ends up with the right family and selection must be matched, not just picked. Select your puppy buyers to match the puppies and be confident they are going to take the time to train the puppy. There is a lot that goes into matching the right puppy with the right family.

Before you breed, you should at minimum be able to answer the following questions.

1. Do you have (and have you read) at least one good book on your breed and one good book about whelping?
2. What are the most common health concerns that occur in your breed?
3. Which of these health concerns can be tested for?
4. What do OFA and CERF stand for and of what importance are they?

5. What are the disqualifying faults and serious conformation faults in your breed?
6. What is your dog's pedigree, where do you get it, and what can you learn from it?
7. What other information do you need about your dog's pedigree that is not on the written paper? Can I obtain the needed information?
8. How old should your bitch be before she is bred?
9. How long is a bitch's cycle and when is she most fertile?
10. How do you find a stud dog and how do you decide if he is appropriate?
11. What problems can occur during the breeding process?
12. What is AI and who should do it?
13. What diseases can a dog get when bred?
14. What precautions should be taken with a bitch in season?
15. Can a litter have more than one father?
16. How long is gestation and what special diet should the bitch be fed?
17. What are the signs a bitch is in labor?
18. What arrangements need to be made for whelping?
19. What type of a whelping area do you need?
20. Which vets will you use in case of emergency?
21. What are the signs that whelping is going well? Developing problems?
22. When should a c-section be performed and is it common in your breed? You should always be prepared for a c-section.
23. When should the vet be called for help?
24. What is oxytocin?
25. How long does whelping take?

26. What does green fluid mean?
27. What do you do if the bitch does not clean and stimulate the puppies?
28. What is the incidence of puppy deaths in each litter?
29. What is the ultimate cost and ultimate risk in breeding?
30. What is a breach birth, how often does it happen, and is this a problem?
31. What happens if a puppy is born without the sac?
32. How do you resuscitate a dead puppy?
33. How do you clear fluid from a puppy's lungs?
34. How do you check for cleft palate and what do you do with deformed puppies?
35. What is mastitis? Eclampsia? What do you do?
36. How do you bottle feed a puppy and what can you feed them?
37. How do you know if the puppies are progressing well?
38. What if they don't nurse?
39. When do you start feeding the puppies real food?
40. When should puppies be vaccinated? Dewormed? Visit the vet?
41. When do puppies have their dewclaws removed?
42. How do you find puppy buyers and how do you know if they will be good?
43. How do you match the right puppy with the right family?
44. When should the puppies be weaned?
45. How do you socialize puppies?
46. How soon can the puppies go to their new homes?
47. How do you temperament test puppies?
48. What information do you need to give the new owners?

49. When do you start training puppies?
50. How do you housetrain and what do you need to do to make housetraining easier for the new owner?
51. What will you offer in the way of a health guarantee and what kind of support will you offer the new owner?

Most reputable breeders put the time and money into showing their dogs and making sure they fit the breed standard. Some breeders will have a mentor who will help them out with breeding questions. If you are breeding for the right purpose you are not in this to make money!

Hopefully this information is helpful for new puppy buyers. Make sure you do your research and find a reputable breeder. Try to avoid websites like petfind and next day pet. Most reputable breeder will send you to someone they know if they do not have any puppies available. This is not a breed you want to get from just anyone.