

PUPPY BUYERS' GUIDE

Part 2

CHOOSING A PUPPY

From the first part of this guide you have decided that you are a suitable dog owner and that the Golden Retriever is the dog for you. Now it is time to turn to the process of selecting a Breeder and a puppy for you.

MAKING AN INFORMED CHOICE

Probably the most important piece of advice that we can give you here is **DON'T BUY ON IMPULSE**. All puppies are cute and it is amazing how many people hand over several hundred dollars because "the kids wanted that one" or, "my wife just couldn't leave it there". But there are people who breed dogs with scant regard for such things as hereditary health problems and temperament problems and who give little or no support once the dog has left their care. In the long run the price you pay for a puppy could be minimal compared with the anxiety and veterinary bills if you don't do your homework before purchase.

It is, however, also important to realise that no puppy will come with a 100% guarantee, even the most careful breeders will experience problems from time to time.

CHOOSING A BREEDER

Talk to several breeders, owners and find those you feel you can trust and communicate with. You should feel happy that you can contact them when necessary if you require further information or if you encounter any problems with the puppy. They should be able to provide you with all the information that you need to raise the puppy and at the same time be able to stand back and let you take the responsibility

You may find you have to wait for a puppy as many breeders only have litters from time. It is better to wait than to get a puppy from someone you can't get on with or one that is born into conditions you are not particularly happy with just because you have to have it **NOW**.

Be prepared to answer some questions yourself. Puppy placement is an important part of a breeder's responsibilities and they will want to know about the environment into which their carefully planned puppy will be going

Please keep in mind that rearing a litter is a time consuming business and that breeders have other commitments as well. If you make appointments try to be punctual and if you alter any of the arrangements please let the breeder know as soon as possible. Should you decide on a particular puppy it is usual to leave a deposit to secure its purchase.

CHOOSING A PUPPY

Generally, if you are looking for a pet, choose the puppy, which most appeals to you, if it looks healthy and you are happy with the conditions into which it has been born. Listen to the advice of the breeder - they know the temperament of the parents and they spend a lot of time with the puppies so they can see certain personality traits developing at an early age. Look at both parents if possible, they should you give you some idea of what the puppy will grow up like.

Even if you think that one in the first litter you look at is the puppy for you, don't commit yourself. Have a look at other litters if only to confirm your choice.

If you hope to compete in any field with your puppy it is a very good idea to get some advice from someone who has some experience in the field. If you want a show puppy get experienced breeders to give you advice and make sure you let the breeder know if you are planning to breed from the puppy at any time in the future.

TAKING YOUR PUPPY HOME

When your pup is ready to come home (usually at 8 weeks of age but no earlier) try to pick a time when there will be someone around during the day to help him settle in. Establish a sleeping place that will be cool in summer and where he will be protected from the weather in winter. Be warned that expensive beds and blankets may be easily destroyed by a teething puppy. Have drinking water available - suitable bowls are unbreakable ones that cannot be tipped up or that the puppy cannot disappear into

Health: It is important that your puppy be healthy when you pick him up. In general you should check the following before you take your puppy:

It should be alert and active.

Its eyes should be clear and bright with no discharge.

Its ears should be clean with no obvious odour.

There should be no nasal discharge.

The coat should be clean and soft with no sign of fleas or skin disorders.

Don't be afraid to mention any doubts you have to the breeder and if you are still not satisfied, have the puppy checked by a veterinarian. Puppies are expensive items that you will very quickly become attached to, so care and effort at this stage could save you a lot, both financially and emotionally, in the future.

Vaccination and worming: When you pick up your puppy you should receive a record of vaccinations and worming and information on future requirements. It is a very good idea to check with the breeder before any alterations are made to these.

Most vets will give the pup a thorough check-up be given at this stage, if they don't make sure you request one. This should also be done each time a dog has its annual inoculations.

Any serious problems should be reported straight back to the breeder. They need to know this for their breeding programs and they may also have had experience in dealing with such problems. If drastic measures or great outlays of money are involved, get another opinion. Other vets or breeders may have different experiences and therefore different insights into the problem.

Food: Make sure you get a feeding chart from the breeder so that you can get the necessary food before you pick up the puppy. It is essential that the puppy does not have a sudden change of diet as gastric troubles can result. If you want to feed something different, the change should be done gradually once the pup has settled in. Remember that the pup will be growing rapidly and that a good balanced diet with extra calcium is essential.

Papers: There are two kinds of papers that you can get with your puppy:

PEDIGREE - This gives information on the puppy's ancestry and although there is a moral obligation for breeders to fill these out correctly, they are useless for showing or breeding purposes unless you have:

REGISTRATION - The official Canine Association of WA document, which shows

The pup is registered in your name

The pup's registration number and

A three generation pedigree

is what you must get if you are buying a "registered puppy" or a puppy "with papers".

CAWA regulations state that it is the breeder's responsibility to transfer a registered pup to the new owner and to pay the costs incurred. This may not be available when you pick up the puppy but you should have it within six weeks. If this does not happen, follow the matter up with the breeder and the CAWA.

You cannot show the puppy nor have a registered litter unless the puppy is officially registered in your name. Even if you have no intention of showing or breeding, make sure you still get the registration paper if you are buying a puppy "with papers". It is amazing how many people change their minds and have to go to a lot of trouble and expense to get something they were entitled to when they first bought their puppy.

Contracts: These are becoming more common in the Canine world.

The CAWA has a Breeding Agreement, which some breeders use to help stop certain puppies being bred from

Export Agreements prevent dogs from being exported without the consent of the breeder

Individual contracts made up by the breeder

All these different types of contracts can be beneficial for new owners, breeders and the Breed as a whole, but all parties must make sure that they understand the terms and conditions and that they are willing to abide by them. Don't be afraid to question the terms and to get the opinions of others - someone in the legal profession may be helpful. Some people do not like to be bound in these ways and if you are one of these you should avoid sales, which involve contracts, otherwise, if you are happy with the terms - go ahead