

Choosing Your Puppy

It's all too easy! You're faced with all those adorable bundles of fluff and common sense flies out of the window! Once you've decided to get a puppy, choosing the one that's right for you could be the difference between many happy, trouble-free years and a worrying, possibly heartbreaking future.

The early weeks of a puppy's life are crucial to its development, so take your time and keep your head! Try taking these notes with you when you first meet your new pet-to-be. Bear in mind that all puppies for sale should be fit and healthy.

First Impressions

- Is the house reasonably respectable?
- Are the puppies kept in the house? It is generally better if puppies are bred indoors as they will have had early experiences of life in a house, including noises such as the vacuum cleaner, doorbell, comings and goings of different people etc.
- Are there people around?
- Is it a busy household?

It's vitally important to meet the mother of the puppies. Be extremely wary if she is not around. When you meet her, ask yourself if she is the kind of dog that you'd like to own, because your puppy will almost certainly have inherited some of her characteristics.

Meeting the Breeder

- Do they enthuse about the litter?
- Are they keeping one of the puppies? (Always a good sign)
- Do they ask you lots of questions about your suitability as an owner or are they just keen to get their hands on your cash? Never be tempted to buy two pups because you feel sorry for them.
- Do they have several litters of puppies of different breeds? This could indicate that they are effectively 'puppy farming'.
- Where is the father of the puppies? It's unlikely that he's there, so ask who and where he is and if you can meet him or at least see a photo.
- What are the puppies being fed on? Ask if you can take some of this home with you.

Looking at the litter

- Have the puppies got plenty to play with?
- How do they interact with each other? Watch for any real underdog or one that is bullying the others. Don't automatically choose the one who "chooses" you!
- Look for a "middle of the road" puppy that is happy to come and meet you and doesn't hang back.
- Where are the puppies going to the loo? Are they already becoming housetrained?

Handling the puppies

- Is the puppy really pleased to see you or has it just come for a sniff?
- Is it more interested in playing with its littermates than meeting you?
- Will the puppy take a titbit from you?
- Look for a puppy that enjoys being gently cuddled while you have a look at its ears and paws. Avoid any that struggle and do not settle down fairly quickly when you've stroked them for a little while.
- Clap your hands quite loudly near the puppy. What is its reaction? Puppy may well be startled but should settle down again really quickly.

And finally **Choose the one that steals your heart!**