



Bad Breeder "Red Flags"

By Mary Shaver



Below are typical practices of bad breeders. Not all breeders will be guilty of all these things, but if you are dealing with a breeder with a preponderance of these breeding practices, you are probably not working with a responsible breeder.

- SELLS MALES FOR LESS MONEY THAN FEMALES. This is because a premium is placed on females by other "wannabe" breeders to start their own backyard breeding program.
- SELLS "SHOW QUALITY" WHILE THEY NEVER SHOW THEMSELVES. How can you know? Markings? That only represents about 10% of what makes up a "show quality" dog.
- SELLS ANY PUPPY WITH FULL REGISTRATION for more money, regardless of the quality or health of the pup.
- BREEDING STOCK WHICH HAS COME FROM THE OLD IRON CURTAIN EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, like Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Czech Republic, Russia, etc. There are a few good kennels, but most of the puppy mill dogs are imported from these countries, and we have NO health history on these dogs.
- BROKERS PUPS FROM EASTERN EUROPEAN PUPPY MILLS. These import brokers simply buy direct from the same Eastern European puppy mills and then turn around and sell to the ignorant buyer. NO good breeder sells to a broker.
- DOES NOT HAVE VERIFIABLE HEALTH CLEARANCES on hips AND elbows of at least MOST of the dogs on the pups pedigree. If you are told "our vet said they are healthy" this is a BIG red flag.
- "BREEDING STOCK COMES FROM HEALTHY LINES" If you are told this, DEMAND PROOF.
- "HEALTHIER EUROPEAN LINES." Don't believe it. There are healthy and unhealthy lines in all countries. Health surveys reveal the same average lifespan (7.1 years) for both American and European Bernese. This is just another sales tactic.
- DOGS WHICH ARE BRED BEFORE TWO YEARS OF AGE AND/OR ARE BRED EVERY HEAT CYCLE.

- "BOTH PARENTS ON PREMISES." Good breeders go out and find the stud dog that best compliments their bitch. Breeders who tend to be in it "for the money" only, don't want to pay a stud fee, so they just get a boy and a girl, and whatever they produce, they produce. Also, if they own several females on only one male. This tells me they are just pumping out puppies - high volume - high sales - more money in the seller's pocket (this is not an absolute. Some good breeders DO have the stud dog, but this is not always the case).
- BREEDER DOESN'T FOLLOW UP ON PREVIOUS LITTERS to assure the pups they have produced are healthy. This is especially important if the puppy seller touts "healthy dogs." If they haven't bothered to follow up on previous litters, how can they make this claim????
- THE "HEALTH GUARANTEE" SALES PITCH.
- BREEDER HAS A USDA LICENSE. This almost guarantees you are dealing with a mass production puppy factory.
- "AKC INSPECTED." Every breeder who breeds AKC registered dogs is subject to AKC inspection. This means nothing.
- BREEDER DISCOURAGES YOU VISITING THEIR FACILITIES, or "suggests" you meet somewhere to get your pup. This is often offered as a convenience to you. It is really because the breeder doesn't want you to see their kennel.
- PRETTY WEBSITES with lot of cute pictures and flowery language like "Farm raised with love," or "we just love our fur babies." Provides little or no useful information such as pedigrees of parents, health clearances, breeding philosophy, etc. This is a very crafty and effective way to bamboozle you as the buyer.
- REQUIRES MONEY UP FRONT before any paperwork (such as pedigree info, contract info, etc) is provided.
- REQUIRES DEPOSITS (USUALLY NON-REFUNDABLE) BEFORE THEIR BITCH IS BRED OR THE LITTER IS WHELPED.
- SELLS WITHOUT A CONTRACT.
- PUPPIES REGISTERED WITH OTHER THAN AKC REGISTRY. While AKC registration does not assure a good breeder, NO responsible American breeder uses any other registry. The puppy mill industry has created many bogus registries to trick buyers. Dogs registered with APR (American Pet Registry), CKC (Continental Kennel Club, not to be confused with the Canadian Kennel Club, a legitimate registry), ACA (American Canine Association), AMW (Archive of Merit Worldwide), FIC (Federation of International Champions), etc, are indicative of a commercial puppy factory.
- DOESN'T ASK YOU ANY QUESTIONS. In an effort to confuse you into thinking they are a responsible breeder, you may be asked to complete a questionnaire, but you won't be asked any follow up questions.

- HAS A PAYPAL OR CREDIT CARD SYSTEM SET UP FOR PAYMENT.
- "I JUST BREED NICE PUPPIES FOR NICE PEOPLE." This is the hallmark of a bad breeder. You are a nice person, and you want a nice puppy, but not from this breeder. What this REALLY means is, "I am breeding whatever dogs I can get my hands on, and I am selling them to anyone who comes up with the cash."
- BREEDS MULTIPLE BREEDS. Some good breeders may breed one or possibly two other breeds, but anyone who has more than 4 or 5 different breeds of dogs is making a business out of pumping out puppies. There is no way this many dogs can be given the attention and care that they need. This is a puppy factory.
- "CHAMPION BLOODLINES." This could mean one dog in a 64 dog pedigree has attained a championship. This also implies that the parents aren't champions. This is just another trick to fool you.
- DOES NOT HAVE A LIFETIME RETURN POLICY FOR DOGS OF THEIR BREEDING. Do not concern themselves with rescue, and take no responsibility for the dogs they have produced once the sale is done and money has changed hands. These breeders represent a large part of the mess that purebred rescue groups have to clean up.
- JUST IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS (EASTER/MOTHER'S DAY, ETC)! Good breeders just don't market their "merchandise" this way. In fact, ethical breeders strongly discourage giving puppies as gifts at any time of year. The decision to add a puppy should be made by the entire family, and good breeders will want to meet with the prospective owners.

These are just a few of the things that would make me suspicious of the motivations of the breeder. These are examples of what is done by those who don't care about whether they are breeding physically/orthopedically or temperamentally sound dogs. They just want to cash in on the breed's popularity and pocket your money. If your puppy winds up crippled by hip or elbow displasia, or dies of cancer at 2 or 3 years old, or has a vicious, aggressive temperament, they really don't care.

IS THIS THE SORT OF PERSON FROM WHOM YOU WANT TO BUY A PUP?

