

Choosing a Puppy

1. Do your homework & research which breeds are appropriate for your lifestyle:

- Have you got the time to exercise an energetic dog?
- Have you got the space & transport for a large or giant breed?
- Would a breed which does not moult be more appropriate for your family?

Information can be found on the Kennel Club (KC) website regarding temperament and disease predispositions of different breeds. If you have children ensure you choose a breed with a good temperament. Perhaps an adult rescue dog from a centre such as the Dog's Trust would fit your lifestyle better than a young, energetic and potentially destructive puppy.

2. Choose a reputable breeder

If you decide on a pedigree breed, ensure you source a puppy from a reputable breeder. Information on how to find a breeder can be found on the KC website. The illegal and farmed puppy trade in this country is growing, if you are buying from a breeder find out as much about them as you can. It is vital that you see the puppy/kitten suckling and visit the litter at least once whilst they are still dependent on their mother.

3. Visit the breeder

The puppies should have been reared in a clean and warm environment to get the best start in life. This might not necessarily be inside the house, they might be in a puppy pen in the garage or kennels outside. They should have plenty of clean bedding, lots of newspaper down etc. and not be wandering around on urine soaked flooring. Ask the breeder lots of questions and look at the puppies' behaviour, they should be relaxed and happy in their surroundings if they've been born there. The RSPCA have some great resources for people looking to buy a puppy or kitten (including a checklist for when you visit and essential questions to ask the breeder) on their website: www.rspca.org.uk.

4. Meet the dam (mother) & if possible the sire (father)

If the breeder does not own the sire (which is generally the case) it may not be possible to see him, but you should always meet the puppies' dam. She should be friendly with a nice temperament and look healthy. She may have lost some weight after rearing a litter of puppies but this should not be excessive.

5. Enquire about the health of the puppies & the dam

Some breeds have predisposed health problems which can be screened for, such as hip, elbow or eye issues. Details about vet screening programmes can be found on the KC website. If the breed you have chosen can be screened for any problems, such as with x-rays, eye exams or genetic tests, ask the breeder if the dam has been tested.

Ask about worming & vaccinations - the vast majority of puppies are born with roundworms no matter how well the dam has been wormed. These worms cross through the placenta when the pups are in the womb and through the milk when the pups are suckling. Pups should be wormed at 2,5 & 8 weeks old and then monthly until 6 months old. The dam should also have been wormed when pregnant and when the pups are suckling her. Find out when the pups and dam were wormed and the worming product used.

Some breeders ensure their litters have a vet check & their first vaccination before they are sold. This is not a necessity but does show that the breeder is genuinely interested in the puppies' health and welfare.

It is also now the law in England (since April 2016) that all dogs must be microchipped once they reach 8 weeks of age, if they will have reached this age by the time you collect yours then they will need to have an ID Chip.

6. Choose the right puppy

Meet the whole litter so you can observe how the puppies play and interact together. Spend some time playing with the puppies - often one will stand out. It can be wise to avoid very nervous puppies. Once you have chosen an individual, do a basic health check. Ensure there is no discharge from the eye or nose, check for skin problems indicated by dandruff, redness, baldness or itching and watch that they can walk & run properly.

7. Consider Insurance

Some breeders will organise 4 weeks insurance for their pups before they are sold provided by companies like PetPlan & the Kennel Club. If this is the case ensure you get the appropriate paperwork from the breeder when you collect your puppy rather than just a verbal promise to send it later. If the breeder has not organised insurance then it is a good idea to organise a 4 week policy yourself (most vets will provide leaflets on how to do this or it may be included in a Puppy/Kitten club membership). This buys you time to decide on an annual insurance policy - it is important to choose the correct policy for you, your vet & the KC can give you guidance on this.

8. Organise a vet check

It is important to ensure your puppy is healthy and has no signs of any disease. Pups can be born with problems such as hernias or develop issues such as dental defects. These should be picked up early so that you can make a decision on the best course of action for your puppy. Most vets will offer a free health check with a Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) where you can discuss nutrition, parasite control and even training/puppy classes.