**Thinking of Buying a Puppy? Find a Responsible Breeder**

 Be selective. Find a breeder who is knowledgeable and make sure you're comfortable with them.

 Visit the breeder's home or kennel and ask to see at least one of the puppy's parents. Get an idea of what the future holds for your dog in terms of temperament and appearance.

 Observe the premises. Is the house/kennel clean? Odor-free? Dogs and puppies should be clean, well fed, lively and friendly. Look for signs of malnutrition such as protruding rib cages or illness such as runny nose/eyes, coughing, lethargy and skin sores.

 Pay attention to how the dogs and puppies interact with their breeder. Does the breeder appear to genuinely care for the puppies and their adult dogs? Both dogs and puppies should not shy away from the breeder and should be outgoing with strangers.

 Find out about the health of your puppy and its parents. Breeders should be honest about the breed's strengths and weaknesses and knowledgeable about the genetic diseases that can affect their breed - including what's being done to avoid them. Breeders should be willing to share proof of health screenings such as OFA and CERF certificates with potential buyers.

 Establish a good rapport with the breeder. He/she will be an excellent resource and breed mentor for you throughout the life of your puppy. You should be encouraged to call the breeder if your dog has a crisis at any stage of its life.

 A responsible breeder may ask you to sign a contract indicating that if specified conditions of care are not met or you become unable to keep the puppy, he/she will reclaim it.

 Don't expect to bring home the puppy until its eight to 12 weeks of age. [Puppies](http://marketplace.akc.org/puppies) need ample time to mature and socialize with its mother and littermates.

 Breeders should be willing to answer any questions you have and should ask many of you as well. Breeders will want to make sure their puppies are going to good homes, with people who know what to expect and have made all the necessary preparations.

Don't leave the premises without the appropriate documentation of the dog's pedigree, a.k.a. "papers." The words "American Kennel Club" as well as the AKC logo should be clearly visible. You'll need to send in this application form to register your dog with the AKC. Be wary of a breeder who refuses/hesitates to give you papers, wants to charge you more for AKC papers, offers papers from a registry other than the AKC, or tells you he/she will mail them to you at a later date.