



Dog Talk Weekly

Where we talk about dogs, share stories, solve problems

Issue 10.5.4 –May 22, 2010

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Feature Article:

Things You Can Do To Ensure You Buy From A Quality Breeder

At some point, you are sure to once again be in search of another dog. You have several options where to look: pet stores, classified ads, local breeders, etc. The thing is, breeding dogs has become a commercial endeavour for many people who see dollar signs instead of caring about the dogs.

Common problems involve improper hygiene. The living and breeding quarters are not clean. The breeder does not take proper care of the mother or the pups. Everything is done on the cheap so the breeder can make as much money as possible.

Some breeders sell so-called purebreds that are not. They care nothing about the health of the dogs they breed. Breeding sick dogs or dogs with genetic problems often results in puppies being weak or carrying those bad genes and illnesses.

You can't even trust pet stores because, once again, they only want to make money. They get their puppies from various sources with little concern for the quality of the dogs. In fact, one common source for pet store puppies is puppy mills. These are breeders who churn out puppies like there's no tomorrow.

So how do you find a quality breeder you can trust?

There are several things to consider when choosing a breeder. You can get the answers by asking a lot of questions. A good, quality breeder will know all about the breed and can answer any questions you might have.

Ask to see where the puppies are living. Ask to meet the puppy's parents. A good breeder should be happy to let you see for yourself that your puppy is being housed in a hygienic environment and that the parents are healthy.

If the breeder seems not to know the answers, get suspicious. If the breeder refuses to let you see the parents and living quarters, go elsewhere.

Expect the breeder to ask you some questions as well. A breeder should care about the destination of the puppies. He or she will want answers about your home, other pets, how you will care for and raise the puppy, your previous experience with dogs and with this breed in particular.

If the breeder is not satisfied with your answers, expect to be denied the adoption.

These are just some of the key areas to consider when choosing a breeder.

Unqualified, uncaring breeders who are in it just for the money will be anxious to make the sale. They will tell you what they think you want to know, rather than the truth.

The biggest key is that a respectable, qualified breeder will actually care about who you are, your background, your home, and the life you plan for the puppy he or she bred so well.

A Personal Story: He Came From a Puppy Mill

When my husband and I went in search of a dog (it had to be an American Eskimo Spitz, according to my husband), he found a breeder on the outskirts of Toronto who sold them. Excited to get our first dog together, we headed out to the farm where the dogs were being bred.

The woman met us in the driveway and after a few exchanges, she asked us to wait on the lawn while she fetched one of the puppies. Moments later, she returned with a little white ball of fluff. While cute, we weren't quite convinced this was the right puppy for us.

We asked if we could just go into the barn and pick a puppy, but she refused. (This was an important clue to her credibility as a breeder.) She returned to the barn and brought another puppy. This one was more friendly, so we bought him and took him home.

At the breeder, my husband spent a lot of time holding the puppy. Shortly after we returned home, he noticed that his belly was covered with flea bites. The puppy got a flea bath and we sat in our apartment enjoying our new pet.

But then, the puppy developed a serious case of diarrhea, straining and whimpering each time he tried to relieve himself. It was non-stop. Determining that this puppy was sick, we returned him to the breeder next day.

She claimed she'd never had complaints before – in fact all her other clients were very happy. She refused to give us a refund, but would replace the puppy with one that is coming up for adoption.

She brought out 3 more puppies and we spent quite some time admiring them, petting them, and watching their responses. One in particular took to us while the others

seemed more interested in what was "over there" and couldn't wait to get there. Clearly, this was the pup for us. But he was only 4 weeks old. We'd have to wait until he was 6 weeks, she said.

During our dealings with this breeder, we learned that she was feeding the puppies cod liver oil (for worms) and raw meat. Hardly appropriate for puppies at the best of times. We decided that her "treatment" and "feeding" was why the first one was sick.

She told us that she gave them the "worming" at 6 weeks of age. That was our cue to get there early. We arrived after 5 weeks to claim our new puppy who we named Nikki.

At the time, we knew nothing about puppy mills, but looking back, it's obvious that is what she had.

As it turned out, Nikki was free of the health issues we saw in the first puppy. In fact, he turned out to be very healthy for all of his 16+ years. I hate to think how he would have fared if we had not taken him early.

How To Ensure A Commercial Dog Food Offers The Best Nutrition

You might already be familiar with the foods that are toxic to your dog: onions, garlic, chocolate (can cause seizures), coffee, alcohol, and grapes and raisins which have been associated with kidney failure in dogs. Plants to worry about include aloe vera, avocado, cyclamen, ferns, hydrangea, ivy, lilies, poinsettia and yucca as well as certain trees.

The bark of some fruit trees is toxic to dogs, so be careful when choosing the stick you'll toss for your dog to retrieve.

When it comes to buying commercial dog food, you are likely to assume that the manufacturer is providing you with the best nutrition for your dog. That is not always the case.

Every year, more dog food products are entering the marketplace. Many have not been given the "seal of approval" by those in the know. They have not even been tested on dogs to see if they actually do what the package claims.

What is a dog owner to do?

Well, I came across a bit of information that will help you.

Look on the label for something referred to as a "Statement of Nutritional Adequacy". It is non-biased, is not an advertising ploy... BUT it IS a Legal Requirement. Unfortunately, it's not always given that title. You can only look for certain phrases on the label that reflect it. If you do not see these phrases on the package, it has not been given proper testing.

Ok. Let's get on with what this "statement" means.

It will tell you:

- 1) if the food is nutritionally balanced and complete
- 2) if it is appropriate for puppies
- 3) whether the food has been tested on dogs or just "formulated to meet..." a certain standard for various nutrients. This means they've met those standards, but the product has not gone through feeding trials to see how the product works on a dog's body.

I can't understand why, but apparently this label is not always prominent and is often hidden in the folds of the sides of the bag of food, so you'll have to look carefully.

Look for single sentences:

"Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO)", the organization that regulates production, labelling, distribution and sale of animal feeds. It promotes uniform pet regulation and establishes nutritional profiles.

Here's what to look for:

"complete and balanced nutrition " (the food is designed to meet a puppy's nutritional requirements)

"growth" or "for all life stages" (the food is adequate until the puppy is full grown)

Puppies need more nutrient-dense foods to support their rapid growth.

BEWARE: if the statement only uses "maintenance". Such products are only good for adult dogs who need to maintain health and do not need the nutrients for good growth. Puppies need more vitamins, minerals and other nutrients. A food that uses "maintenance" will leave a puppy with serious nutrient deficiencies.

Do not rely on the photo that appears on the dog food container. It might not represent the appropriateness of the food for your particular dog.

Also, look for:

"animal feeding tests using AAFCO procedures". This indicates that the food meets the AAFCO nutrient profiles and has been properly tested on dogs.

However, it can be "formulated to meet the nutritional levels established by the AAFCO Dog Food Nutrient Profiles" and is legal to sell, but it was never actually tested.

Do not assume that if one dog food made by one manufacturer meets the AAFCO guidelines that all food produced by that company does. Always look for the clues discussed to be sure.

Also, look for large-breed puppy food if your puppy is a large breed dog as he will have nutritional requirements that smaller breeds do not need.

And finally, choose manufacturers who have been around for awhile. They will have the most experience in producing the best dog food for your pet.

A Personal Revelation

When my dog refused to retrieve a particular stick I had thrown for him, I thought he was just 'not very interested'. He had retrieved it already and I could see no reason for him not to get it again.

Instead, he went in search of a different stick. This one, he played with frequently and spent hours gnawing on it.

Then one day, I learned that the bark of certain fruit trees is toxic to your dog. Clearly, my dog knew better than I did.

I wish I could remember the tree that stick came from but I suspect it was apple, but it could have been cherry. Either way, be careful when your dog chews on sticks to be sure they are not from these trees.

This is especially true with puppies because they are not enough aware of their new environment. They will constantly be testing various objects to determine whether they are edible or to work their new teeth.

Regular Sections:

- Dog Trivia

Did you know that roughhousing with your dog will teach him that it's alright to challenge you? This is not a desirable trait to encourage in your dog as he could become dangerous, especially if he is a medium to large breed and one that is built to win battles.

Are you aware of these potential threats to your dog? Each can be poisonous to them: Macadamia nuts, azaleas, amaryllis, Japanese yew, mistletoe, lily of the valley, oleander, foxglove, elephant's ear, mushrooms, daffodil bulbs, nicotiana leaves, tomato plants, autumn crocus, dog laurel, fetter bush, make berry, stagger-bush, rhubarb, calico bush, laurel, lambkill, castor bean, rosebay.

For a complete list of potential harmful plants, visit www.aspca.org or www.hsus.org.

- Competitions

The May photo contest is coming to a close in another 9 days. If you want to enter your best dog photos, you'd better do so before May 31. The voting will begin on June 1 and the winner chosen at the end of June.

- Dog Talk Weekly News

Send Your Ideas:

I welcome your feedback on what you think of Dog Talk Weekly. If you have ideas for future topics, please send them along.

Watch Your Inbox:

In the next week or so, I will be sending out a survey to get your views on Dog Talk Weekly. I would appreciate it if you could take a few moment out of your busy schedule to answer the questions and send it back to me. Don't worry. It won't be very long. You should be able to complete it in 5 minutes or less. Your responses will help me to tailor the newsletter to your needs.

- Free Stuff

I've put together a 14-page report for you that will be released shortly. It is titled, "**Is It A Dog Medical Emergency?**" and offers a brief look at the signs and symptoms that can mean your dog needs to see a veterinarian fast! This is a \$7 value, but as a member, you'll get it free. Watch you inbox for the special email and download link sometime this week.

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Classified Ads:

**Does your dog challenge you?** Discover how to break that dog nuisance behavior fast. Grab my latest book in the Positive Dog Training series, "How To Deal With Nuisance Behaviors". Go to <http://ebook-haven.com/PositiveDogTraining.htm> for details.

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Send Your Photos! Throughout the rest of April and all of May, I invite you to send me your dog photos – the cuter, the better. At the end of May, the members will have a chance to vote on which one they like the best. The winning photo will become the "Dog of the Month". The photo will be displayed on a special "Dog of the Month" page at http://www.dogtalkweekly.com/dog_photo_of_month.htm

Be sure to include a small caption (about as long as that paragraph) giving a few fun details about your dog / photo.

This "Dog of the Month" contest will continue every month throughout the year. At the end of the year, members will have a chance to vote and name the "Dog of the Year" (More details to come)

IMPORTANT NOTE:

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To protect yourself and me, please only send in your own work. That way we will be absolutely sure.

I appreciate your adhering to this law.

That's it for this issue. I hope you enjoyed it.

Until next week...

Get out there and have fun with your dog. Take some great photos. Collect wonderful memories.

Sylvia

P.S.: Don't forget to send me your stories and ideas for upcoming issues of Dog Talk Weekly. Just send them to me through my contact form here: <http://sylviadickens.com/contactform/contactus.php>

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Did you know you can view Dog Talk Weekly in PDF format online? Simply go to the Archives page where all previous issues are listed. The online version might contain images and other content that is not included in the email version.

You can access the archives here:

<http://www.dogtalkweekly.com/archives.htm>

Dog Nutrition is vital to your dog's life expectancy and quality of life. I've written a book on how to make sure your dog gets a healthy, nutritious diet and avoids many of the dangers that come with certain foods. Find out more at <http://healthydognutritionsecrets.com/healthydogPP1.htm>

Puppy Parenting Course: Are you drowning in a sea of questions about raising your puppy the right way? This 24-week course feeds you all the information you need in bite-size portions that you can use during your puppy's early years. Get a free trial today. <http://www.dogownersu.com/FreeTrial.htm>

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