

# Essential Questions to Ask Before Buying a Dog or Puppy



**Are you required to be licensed?** Any breeder who sells more than 25 dogs in one year and/or produces more than three litters of puppies in a year is required to have their facility inspected and licensed by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). If they meet these criteria but cannot show you a license or inspection report, find a different breeder.

**Can I see your license from the State of Wisconsin?** Some breeders don't require licenses if they sell fewer than 25 dogs a year, but those that sell more than 25 must be inspected and found to be in compliance with state regulations. They will hold a license issued by the State of Wisconsin DATCP. If they cannot or will not show you their license, find a different breeder.

**Are the puppies' parents "certified"?** Many breeders will have their dogs evaluated and tested for common genetic condition and ultimately "certified" by a veterinary specialist or organization. Research your chosen breed before you buy to determine if the breed is predisposed to a particular condition.

**Can I see one or both of the parents?** If possible, ask to see at least the dam of the litter to evaluate her health and temperament. If the sire is unavailable, ask for information to contact the sire's owner. If they will not let you see either of the parents, find a different breeder.

**Can I see where you keep the puppies and their mother?** Check to see that the facilities the puppies are kept in are clean, well-ventilated and allow adequate room for the puppies to play and socialize. If they will not let you see the environment in which the puppies are raised, find a different breeder.

**How have the puppies or dogs been socialized?** Proper socialization consisting of good experiences of a puppy or dog with other puppies or dogs and lots of different ages, sizes and types of people will give you the best chance at having a well-adjusted dog.

**What vaccinations has the puppy or dog had?** Breeders and sellers must keep good records as proof that vaccinations were given and to indicate who administered the vaccinations.

**Has the puppy or dog been checked for worms?** You should assume that a puppy was born with worms and make sure that they are appropriately treated.

**What visits has the puppy or dog had with a veterinarian?** Have they been examined and declared "healthy"? If not, what problems have they had? Have they been on any medications? Licensed breeders must provide a copy of a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) to you when they sell you the puppy. If they do not provide a CVI, find another breeder.

**What is your guarantee?** If the puppy or dog becomes ill or later shows signs of a genetic condition, what will they do? This is a difficult topic but one that is a lot easier to cover up front rather than later. A good guarantee will certify the health of both parents and ensure they did not pass on a genetic condition.

**Can you provide references?** Request a couple references of puppy or dog owners that have purchased within the past year. Call them. If the breeder refuses to provide you with references, find a different breeder.

**What is the family history?** Most reputable breeders will know the lineage of their breeding dogs. Be sure to get the paperwork when you take your puppy home if it was sold to you as registered or eligible to be registered. Don't allow the breeder to send you the paperwork later because you might never get it.

*If at any time you feel uncomfortable with the answers you receive from the seller or about the conditions under which your purchase is taking place, do not purchase the puppy or dog simply because you think you are saving it from deplorable living conditions. By purchasing that puppy or dog you will only keep that seller in business for one more day, allowing them the opportunity to mistreat even more puppies or dogs as time goes on.*

**If you've run across a breeder that has caused you concern,  
you are urged to report them to DATCP at 608.224.4872.**