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Blaming reputable breeders will not cure dog abandonment

The conversation shouldn't be shelter and rescue vs. breeder — it should be reputable vs. inhumane.



by Good Dog



The myth of “millions”

Although dog abandonment has slowly decreased each year since 2011, dog homelessness remains a pervasive issue in the United States. The euthanasia of healthy, adoptable animals is a reality that happens in many shelters across the country. Still, the notion that millions of dogs are euthanized each year is misguided. Despite this myth, a staggering 670,000 dogs lose their lives to euthanasia yearly. In an attempt to cull dog overpopulation, blame is often placed upon reputable dog breeders who are producing ethically bred litters. However, this kind of criticism is often unfounded. To properly advocate against dog abandonment, it's critical to understand the stark difference between good breeders and irresponsible sources.

Who is responsible for dog abandonment?

Puppy mills and unethical backyard breeders are fueling the dog abandonment issue by breeding dogs for profit without concern for health, safety, or temperament. These disreputable sources often fill pet stores and online storefronts with unhealthy and emotionally unsound

puppies. As a result, ill-advised customers end up with a dog who has severe health or behavioral issues that they are completely unprepared to cope with.

The ASPCA notes that unexpected problems with health, size, and behavior are the primary reasons animals end up in the shelter system, detailing that “problematic behaviors, aggressive behaviors, grew larger than expected, or health problems owner couldn’t handle” are among the top issues dog owners state when they relinquish or attempt to rehome their pet.

Since unethical sources are selling their puppies for profit without consideration for welfare, potential dog owners are almost never screened — this means puppies often find themselves in the hands of uneducated, ill-prepared, or irresponsible dog owners. When these people realize they are financially or physically incapable of caring for the puppy they purchased from an irresponsible source, they are often left with no choice but to abandon or rehome the dog. Moreover, irresponsible owners often don’t spay or neuter their pets, leading to accidental or unplanned litters that contribute to the cycle of dog overpopulation.

Responsible dog ownership is the cornerstone of repairing the dog abandonment situation. This means screening and educating prospective dog owners, finding an owner that’s a good fit for each dog, understanding the needs of each breed, and committing to their dog financially and emotionally for life. Some of the biggest advocates for this kind of responsible dog ownership, however, happen to be reputable dog breeders.

Where reputable breeders stand

The notion that reputable dog breeders are contributing to dog overpopulation can be misguided, because dogs from good breeders almost never end up in the shelter system. All ethical breeders agree to take back or help rehome their dog if an issue arises, regardless of age. If a breeder doesn’t stand behind their dog for life — they aren’t a reputable breeder. This doesn’t mean that purebred dogs don’t enter shelters or rescues; it means only that there is a crucial difference between purebred dogs and well-bred dogs.

By grouping reputable breeders in the same category as puppy mills or unethical backyard breeders, the striking difference between humane and inhumane breeding practices is missed. Good breeders always prioritize the well-being of their animals and without them, the protection of physically and emotionally healthy dogs would be virtually non-existent.

Reputable breeders screen and vet each person who purchases one of

their puppies to ensure they're making a suitable dog-human match. This means puppies are much more likely to end up in capable, educated homes. They act as a resource for their puppy buyers throughout their dogs' lives, and work tirelessly to shed light on the importance of responsible dog ownership.

Considering there will always be a market for puppies from breeders, trying to push out reputable programs will only open up gaps that puppy mills and unethical sources will rush to fill, prolonging the dysfunctional cycle of inhumane breeding, unhealthy dogs, irresponsible dog ownership, and dog abandonment. It's critical to support and empower those people that are doing right by their dogs in order to weed out the irresponsible sources who are looking only to profit off of their animals.

This isn't shelter vs. breeder — it's reputable vs. unethical

The conversation around dog abandonment and euthanasia is delicate and divided, often causing people to feel like they need to take a side. This long standing debate has led to an attack on reputable breeders, though the argument shouldn't have pit breeders against shelters in the first place.

It's critical to reframe the conversation around dog abandonment in order to make progress. Education about responsible dog ownership is at the core of the solution. Ethical breeders, shelters, and rescues should be celebrated, while inhumane programs should foot the blame for the dysfunctional system they are fueling. By shifting the conversation, advocates against dog abandonment will be well-positioned to build a better world for dogs.

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