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The fundamental difference between purebred dogs and well-bred dogs

Never assume that a dog came from a reputable breeder simply because it's purebred.



by Good Dog



Purebred doesn't equal well-bred.

While dog homelessness has been on the decline since 2011, the [ASPCA estimates](#) that around 3.3 million dogs still enter the shelter system each year. Of that number, approximately 5% of all dogs in shelters are purebred. A recent study conducted by the [National Animal Interest Alliance](#) helps fight the stigma currently surrounding reputable, responsible breeders and the people who choose to purchase puppies from them.

A common misconception is that reputable dog breeders are contributing to the issue of dog overpopulation in shelters and rescues. The statistics from the NAIA's study support the notion that reputable breeders are one of the strongest advocates for responsible dog ownership and are vehemently against dog abandonment. Unlike puppy mills, backyard breeders, and other irresponsible sources, reputable breeders are committed to keeping their dogs out of the shelter and rescue system. They'll always take back or help rehome one of their puppies if any issue arises with the owner, regardless of the dog's age.

This can be confusing, though, for people who regularly see purebred

dogs entering the shelter and rescue system. It's essential to note that a purebred dog is not always a well-bred dog, and there are many fundamental differences between the two that might be difficult to identify at first glance. These distinctions, though, are absolutely crucial to recognize in order to understand and collapse the shame surrounding well-bred dogs and those responsible breeders who care for them.

1. Dogs that come from puppy mills, backyard breeders, and unethical sources can be purebred.

Many of the purebred dogs that do end up in the shelter system are coming from disreputable sources who breed to make a profit while disregarding the health and well-being of their dogs. These dogs are often neglected, overbred, inbred, and never health tested for possible genetic diseases they could be passing along to their puppies.

The simple fact that a dog is or looks purebred is no indication that it came from a reputable or responsible breeder.

2. Irresponsible breeding practices can lead to serious health and behavior problems that are contributing to dog abandonment.

Due to neglect and inhumane breeding practices, dogs from unethical sources are prone to developing serious health and behavior problems that many unsuspecting pet purchasers are unaware of and ill-prepared to cope with.

A well-meaning but uneducated dog owner might be overwhelmed by the medical or behavioral issues that come along with a dog from an irresponsible source. According to the ASPCA, pet problems are the number one reason that owners surrender their pet — this includes “problematic behaviors, aggressive behaviors, grew larger than expected, or health problems the owner couldn't handle.”

For this reason, dogs that are knowingly or unknowingly purchased from an unethical source are more likely to end up in the shelter system.

3. Never assume that a dog came from a reputable breeder simply because it's purebred.

Reputable breeders go to great lengths to ensure that their dogs receive the very best care. This includes proper health testing, meticulous planning, numerous trips to the vet, and rigorous screening of potential puppy owners. Additionally, responsible breeders always agree to rehome or take back a dog of theirs if the owner can no longer keep it —

this is how they can be confident that their dogs will never enter the shelter system.

If there is a purebred dog in a shelter or rescue, it's important to think critically about the source of that dog before instantly concluding that it came from a responsible breeder. If a breeder is behind a purebred dog that entered the shelter system and they won't take their dog back, they aren't breeding ethically or responsibly.

The individuals who are breeding senselessly or unethically should not be lumped in with reputable breeders who are advocates for healthy, emotionally sound dogs and responsible dog ownership.

4. Not all dog breeders are the same.

When discussing dog overpopulation and abandonment, dog breeders are often unfairly grouped into one category. Putting responsible dog breeders on the same tier as unethical sources is often an empty critique and lacks a fundamental understanding of the broken system that is perpetuating the issue of dog homelessness.

While reputable dog breeders are working hard to uphold breed standards and protect structurally, physically, and emotionally sound dogs, unethical sources are focusing only on making a profit off of their animals. It's critical to note as well that a license to breed does not indicate welfare — only quality of care can do that.

5. Reputable dog breeders are important.

It cannot be overstated how necessary it is to fix the broken system and shut down the unethical sources that are contributing to dog abandonment. Though, it's equally as crucial to support and celebrate the efforts being made by reputable dog breeders. These individuals are often misunderstood and blamed for dog overpopulation, despite their tireless dedication to producing healthy, sound dogs.

The notion that anyone who chooses to purchase a dog from a reputable breeder is directly hurting dogs in shelters is unwarranted and rooted in a lack of education. Responsible breeders do their best to make sure their dogs are genetically and behaviorally healthy — something that is incredibly significant, especially for someone who might need a service dog, therapy dog, or a breed for a certain job or lifestyle. As a potential dog owner, it's critical to do the research and decide which ethical source and type of dog is best for you.

Where do we go from here?

As we work towards ending puppy mills and disreputable sources who are enabling the broken system, we should empower reputable breeders, shelters, and rescues. This means educating prospective dog owners about puppy mills, backyard breeders, and pet stores who source their animals from these unethical programs. Before purchasing or adopting a dog, communicate at length with the source and be sure that you're supporting a program that is prioritizing the well-being of their dogs.

The next time you see a purebred in the shelter system, consider that it might be coming from an unethical source instead of blaming a reputable breeder. Recognize that responsible breeders are not contributing to the situation of dog abandonment and overpopulation. To be an advocate for responsible dog ownership means that it's absolutely vital to understand the nuances behind unethical and ethical breeders so we can celebrate those responsible individuals who are preserving healthy dogs and providing the very best care for their animals.

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