

ETHICAL BREEDING AND PERPETUATION OF THE BREEDS

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The existence of specific breeds of dogs is an important part of the genetic health of the species (adding to genetic diversity) and also an important part of human history and human sociology. Therefore, unless you think that these things are not important and that all breeds should go extinct, you should know that your support of the work of *ethical* breeders is important to the continuing existence and health of the breeds. To argue, as some have, that no breeders should engage in perpetuating the breeds until there are "no more dogs in rescue" is a completely unrealistic standard for two reasons: First, since a female dog is not likely able to produce puppies after approximately seven years of age, a moratorium on breeding for only seven years would result in the complete extinction of all specific breeds of dogs. Second, it is not a realistic goal to think that we will ever be able to eliminate all dogs from rescue as we have not even been able to do this with our own species where millions of children languish in orphanages and permanent foster care while people continue to have children of their own. Dogs do not end up in rescue because there are "too many of them." Dogs end up in rescue due to monetary and/or personal reasons and circumstances of the owners and/or because of behavior or health issues of the dogs. Also, due to either ignorance or profit-motive, dogs in rescue come from unethical breeders who do not take responsibility for the dogs they bring into the world. Another source of dogs in rescue is from the non-purposeful breeding of dogs (accidental) who are not spayed or neutered and also not under constant owner supervision.

If you would allow me, I would like to take a moment to give you information on what you will need to look for to determine if someone is a good, ethical breeder. An ethical breeder will be doing what is required to protect the breed as it moves into the future and ensure that you will be purchasing a healthy puppy.

If you, like me, love your breed and want it to be around for centuries to come and be healthier with each passing decade and have physical traits the developers of the breed intended, and therefore respect the history of the breed, then you will want to support a breeder with those same goals. Many breeders do not do what is best for the breed either out of ignorance or because doing what is right eliminates their ability to make a profit. They make excuses as to why they don't do what is best. An ethical breeder makes sacrifices both in monetary profit and time to ensure they put the interest of the breed and each individual puppy before their own interest.

Here are the MINIMUM things that an ethical breeder does:

An ethical breeder acquires all mandatory health certifications and testing on *both* the female and the male to be using for breeding. These mandatory certifications are listed on the Canine Health Information Center website. Here is the page for the Weimaraner breed: <http://www.caninehealthinfo.org/brdreqs.html?breed=WE> Getting these health certifications on all dogs to be bred and making good decisions based on those certifications ensures that common genetic diseases found in the breed will be eliminated through good breeding practices and that your puppy will be the healthiest that he/she can possibly be. This often means you will pay a little more for a puppy up front to help cover the cost of testing but it will save you a lot of money in the long run in veterinary expenses. In contrast, if your puppy is born with one of these diseases (common in poorly bred dogs), you can expect to pay a lot more money over time in health care expenses. Most of these diseases do not show up until the dog is several years old so the best way to maximize the good health of a dog is through good genetic testing of the parents. Good breeders also identify dogs with other health related issues such as allergies or poor temperaments in their breeding program and will eliminate those dogs as candidates for breeding to further select against future problems.

An ethical breeder gets third-party non-stakeholder expert opinions on both the females and males that they intend to potentially breed. What many people do not know is that to get someone trained in structural health and quality and the fundamental characteristics of the breed and is also truly non-biased (for example, not an owner or friend of the owner of the dog), the dog must be entered into dog shows to be professionally evaluated. The only purpose of a dog show to have a trained professional evaluate your dog for worthiness of inheritable traits, particularly structural health, which has profound effects on the long term health of the dogs especially on arthritis and other structural related problems. Achieving the title of breed "Champion" demonstrates that a dog has physical heritable traits consistent with structural health for a Weimaraner. Dog shows are not a beauty contest - they are "breed stock certification." All efforts are made so that potential judge's biases are not in effect. In lieu of the ability to travel to dog shows or in other rare circumstances, an ethical breeder may choose to seek a professional litter evaluator instead (dogfolk.com) to guide their breeding program. Another example of when a dog may be used in a breeding program that has not obtained the title of breed Champion, is when the dog is very accomplished in a performance event such as field training or agility competition. But, in those cases, the pedigree available for the dog should have significant representation of dogs that have obtained the title of breed Champion in their background to ensure structural quality is being valued. Additional standards are being developed at this time as well that may add to the minimum necessary to be considered an ethical breeder such as though being heralded by The Institute of Canine Biology. When those standards prove to be tested and beneficial, Weimaraner Rescue of SC will be in full support.

Ethical breeders also take back *any and all* puppies they produce if things do not work out in the home for any reason so none ever end up in shelters or in rescue. In fact, ethical breeders will require a buyer to sign a contract that mandates the return of the puppy to them in a case of owner surrender to protect the puppy against an unfortunate outcome. The ethical breeder will then take responsibility to find that relinquished dog a new appropriate home and address any behavior problems, if any, that may have caused that dog to be surrender back to the breeder.

And lastly, an ethical breeder will require puppy buyers to sign a contract stating that they will not use the puppy they are purchasing for breeding in the future unless they too meet all the above minimum standards as well.

So, in summary, an ethical breeder:

1. Acquires all the minimum health certifications required on the breed (info available on Canine Health Information Center website: <http://caninehealthinfo.org/>);
2. Gets third party certification/validation of their breeding stock;
3. Takes back any puppy they produce for any reason for the lifetime of the dog;
4. Requires puppy buyers to sign contracts preventing the new buyer from becoming an unethical breeder themselves;
5. May also be working on other breed enhancing strategies such as performance events and titles or protocols of The Institute of Canine Biology.

All good knowledgeable breeders that care about the health of the puppies they produce and the long term overall health of the breed do these things. You will pay a little more up front for a quality puppy but you will pay less in the long run due to the typically decreased lifetime health care cost that comes with a well bred puppy. Usually the fee for an ethically bred puppy will be \$1000.00-\$2000.00, depending on the breed. If that price is too high for you, you should adopt a rescue of your breed whose adoption fees usually range from \$0.00-350.00. It is better to provide a rescue with a wonderful home than give your money to an unethical breeder who is ruining the health of the breed and, due to their business practices or ignorance of the above information, is producing dogs that end up in rescue. Unethical for-profit breeders also know just the kind of things to say to make it seem like they are ethical, like offering money back guarantees on unhealthy puppies (but generally requiring the return of the puppy knowing you will never part with a puppy you have fallen in love with) or similar ploys they know they will never need to follow through on. They may also forge documents making it seem like they have completed the ethical requirements so buyer beware! Contact the "national breed club" of the breed you are interested in to get guidance on ethical breeders in your area.

For a Weimaraner puppy, the national breed club referral contact who will have a list of puppies available now or in the near future from ethical breeders is:

Billie Thompson

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