

Why Go to a Dog Breeder?

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We conformation exhibitors take for granted the cooperative nature of our well-trained canines. But other dog owners certainly don't and really are amazed when they see our dogs so well behaved out in public. Whether it's at the veterinarian's office or shopping for dog food, bringing a crate-trained, well-socialized and well-groomed canine with us is bound to make other owners reflect on how little cooperation they can expect from their own lunging, barking pets.

I've had owners show me their dogs' overgrown talons and sigh, "Molly doesn't let me cut her nails." If I pet someone's dog and discover huge, impenetrable mats easily felt under a brushed top coat, the owner wistfully explains that Bailey growls menacingly when anyone picks up a comb or slicker.

A day at the vet's becomes more traumatic than it needs to be if a dog is not crate trained and will try to eat its way out of an enclosure.

We explain that show dogs aren't born accepting crates, nail clippers and hair dryers but as breeders, we handle our puppies from the time they are days old. Clipping their nails weekly, running a comb through their short coats daily and letting them play hide-and-seek in a crate builds up positive associations before puppies grow large and rebellious.

The payoff for a puppy buyer is that all the puppies in a litter, whether meant for pet or show homes, get this same level of care, attention and socialization. All a pet owner has to do is continue the same good habits that were instilled by the breeder and half the owner's work has been done. Dogs purchased from puppy mills and pet stores do not get this kind of hands-on attention in those first eight crucial weeks.

At a time when show breeders in this country are fighting for the right to continue enjoying their hobby, it's important to point out the socialization of puppies and mentoring of new owners that responsible breeders provide for the life of the dog. In tough economic times, it's all about value added. How can pet buyers put a price on crate training and early grooming, experiences that will make living with a well-bred puppy infinitely easier and more enjoyable? Ironically, the breeder's well-socialized pet puppies will be priced far more reasonably than the commercially produced pups in the suburban mall with dubious papers and in questionable health.

The next time an admiring stranger on the street or at a show comments on your well-behaved dog, explain that this is the type of socialized, outgoing pet that a good breeder is proud to produce.

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