

Acquiring a Boxer Puppy

There are many aspects to consider when acquiring a boxer puppy.

Due to the popularity of the Boxer, there are many reputable breeders to choose from, and there are even more breeders to avoid. You should seek out the best Boxer that you can afford. There is no such thing as “just a pet dog” or a “pet-quality dog.” You cannot afford to own a secondrate dog. Inferior quality in a pet only translates to high veterinary bills, wasted time and broken hearts! You are seeking a Boxer that looks and acts like a Boxer. You want your neighbors to admire your canine charge and tell you how handsome he is. If the appearance of the dog doesn’t matter, why get a Boxer? It’s not that simple. You want a handsome Boxer that is the picture of good health: a pedigree that indicates his parents have normal or better hips, no history of cancers or the like in their backgrounds and good eyes. Since the Boxer is prone to a number of genetic problems, you want the healthiest dog you can find. You’re not merely investing money in this purchase—you’re investing your heart and your family! What could be more costly than that? If the breeder is trying to pitch a “pet-quality puppy” at you, tell him that you want the best puppy he has. While the conformation of the dog isn’t a primary consideration for a pet person, all of the other important factors that breeders emphasize are. Reread the temperament and character portion of the breed standard: is there a single quality listed there that doesn’t appeal to you?

Be aware that the novice breeders who advertise at attractive prices in the local newspapers are probably kind enough towards their dogs, but often do not have the expertise or facilities required to raise these dogs properly. These pet puppies are frequently badly weaned and left with the mother too long without the supplemental feeding required by this fast-growing breed. This lack of proper feeding can cause indigestion, rickets, weak bones, poor teeth and other problems. Veterinary bills may soon distort initial savings into financial or, worse, emotional loss. Inquire about inoculations and when the puppy was last dosed for worms. Check the ears for signs of debris or irritation, indicating the presence of mites.

Color is a matter of personal choice, but whether you prefer a bright fawn Boxer with flashy white markings or a brindle dog, your puppy should have a dark nose and, preferably, dark toenails. This is a consideration of pigmentation, which should not be confused with color. Color in Boxers generally becomes lighter, so it is wise to choose a puppy with deep rich pigmentation and as much black as possible. By six to ten weeks of age, the Boxer’s nose should be well pigmented and broad. You do not want a Boxer puppy with a narrow nose, since his muzzle will likely not develop to the desired broadness. In selecting a fawn-colored dog, seek a deep red coloration, especially down the back and head; in a brindle dog, look for distinctive herringbone striations against a deep red background. For the flashy look, white markings should be present on the chest, legs and forehead and muzzle.

In show dogs, breeders seek out deep pigmentation complemented by white markings on the head, legs and chest. Dark eyes are best, and Boxer pups tend to have bluish eyes that darken as they age. Look for expression in your puppy’s eyes, as this is a good sign of intelligence. Boxers often show the haw of the eye, one or both of which may be white; this adds to the Boxer expression. Since the Boxer is a “head breed,” you want a puppy that makes a pleasing impression. The Boxer puppy’s muzzle should be broad and deep; this is important for the expression of the dog as an adult. The puppy’s head should have some wrinkles, which will disappear as the dog matures. Check that the puppy’s lower jaw is as wide as possible, ideal for incoming adult teeth. Never sacrifice overall balance and harmony for a fabulous head. Judges will view the whole picture, not just the dog’s head.

Note the way your choice moves. The Boxer, even in puppyhood, should show clean movement with no tendency to stumble or drag the hind feet. Boxers tend to be awkward in their puppy months, so do not confuse this immature lack of coordination with a structural defect. It’s best to take along an experienced Boxer person if you are concerned about the structure of the puppy. This tends to be a show-dog concern more than a pet concern, though we all want Boxers that can move easily and effortlessly. In evaluating the structure of your pup, consider that the topline (along his back) should be as straight as possible, with the shoulders sloping and the back short. Avoid topline that “roach” toward the center (rise noticeably), weak rear quarters, poor feet and, of course, shy or spooky temperaments.

The puppy’s bite should be somewhat undershot, meaning the lower jaw protrudes further than the upper jaw. Look for a lower jaw line that is as wide as possible. Be sure that the tongue doesn’t stick out when the puppy closes his mouth. The bite is important for show dogs as well as pet dogs. Although your pet puppy won’t be disqualified at the dinner table for an incorrect bite, he may not be able to eat and breathe comfortably throughout his life.

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