

Popular Dogs: Greyhounds

Prospective Greyhound puppy owners should be prepared to do lots of training and socializing.

Audrey Pavia

The Screening Process Although AKC Greyhound breeders are hard to come by, you still need to do your homework to make sure the breeder you do find is responsible. "Look for honesty," says Roberson. "Choose one who is interested in the overall picture of the dog: that is, function, beauty, sound temperament and good health."

For Kostic, experience is most important. "The longer breeders are involved with a breed, the more they know about its characteristics and the gene pool that is available," he says. He also recommends evaluating the breeder's kennel environment and inspecting it if you can. "How are the dogs maintained? Are they healthy? Do they have clean, safe conditions?" he says. "Are they fed a good diet, and do they look well-exercised? Is the dog run clean? Basically, the conditions should be the same or better than you have at your house."

It's also important to find out if the breeder's dogs have AKC titles in conformation. "There are some unscrupulous breeders who will take their dogs to matches to get placement or participation ribbons to show buyers what a great show dog they have," says Kostic. But it is a title, not simply ribbons, that helps indicate breeding quality. "The purpose of awarding a title of Champion (Ch.) to a dog is that it shows the animal has been judged to meet the standards of that breed and should be used for breeding."

You will be asking Greyhound breeders questions to help determine if they are responsible, but expect that breeders will likewise have a list of questions for you. "When shopping for a breeder, look for someone who asks a lot of questions and seems truly concerned about the home environment the pup will go to," says Debbie Butt, a Greyhound breeder in Tom's Brook, Va.

LeMieux points out that you should talk to several breeders in your quest to get a feeling for who they are. "You might click with one breeder and not another," she says. "Ultimately, go with someone you trust."

Picking the Puppy Once you have settled on a breeder, you may have to wait for the litter to be born. When the pups are 7 weeks of age, you can visit them and see which ones of those available for purchase strike your fancy. "Some breeders keep all the pups until they are 6 months old, so they can get an idea of which ones are show quality. Sometimes, a breeder can tell right away if a puppy is suitable for showing, and in this case, the pup will be available as a pet a lot sooner," LeMieux continues.

Because the number of puppies you have to choose from in the litter will be limited, your decision should be a lot easier. The breeder will be a significant help in this regard, too, and may even make the decision for you. "When meeting with a puppy buyer, I try to explain what I think of the pup's temperament based on how the pup acts," says Butt. "I give the buyer my opinion of which pup will be best for him or her. I use a lot of gut instinct with this."

Whether the breeder picks out a puppy or puppies for you, still evaluate each pup yourself for health and temperament. "When looking at a pup, hold it and see if it is relaxed while being handled," says Butt. "When you make noises and play with toys around the puppy, does it respond to you? At first, the puppy may be apprehensive because you are a new person, but it should relax quickly."

You and your prospective puppy should both feel comfortable. "At this point, it's which of the pups is most attracted to you," Kostic says. "More often than not, the attraction is mutual, and the puppy will choose you by its behavior."