

Group Launches Guidelines on Choosing a New Dog

International animal organizations help prospective dog owners choose the right pet.

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A group of international veterinary and animal organizations have drawn up practical guidelines to help prospective dog owners choose the right pet for them.

The Dog Breeding Stakeholder Group consists of the Blue Cross, a registered United Kingdom animal welfare charity; the British Veterinary Association; the British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation; the Companion Animal Welfare Council; the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; the Dogs Trust; Kennel Club; PDSA, a United Kingdom veterinary charity; the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; and the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare.

“Buying a puppy or dog is a serious undertaking and I am delighted that the members of the group have put their individual politics aside in order to work together in the interests of dog welfare,” said Nicky Paull, chair of the Dog Breeding Stakeholder Group and trustee of the British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation. “All of us feel very strongly that educating potential puppy and dog owners to make the right choices is an essential part of promoting responsible breeding and responsible pet ownership.

“We have all signed up to the principle that all those who breed dogs should prioritize health, welfare and temperament over appearance when choosing which animals to breed. If potential owners understand what they should expect from a breeder then good practice will be promoted.”

The Guidance on Choosing Your New Dog, in short, says prospective dog owners should: Research first. This includes evaluating a dog’s needs and temperaments based on age, breed, health status, gender and past experiences, among other criteria.

Take into account the average lifespan of the dog and the estimated costs of lifetime care before buying.

Make sure that the dog is suitable for you, your home and your lifestyle.

Avoid buying animals with exaggerated physical features that are likely to affect their quality of life, and don’t base the decision on appearance alone.

Always see the puppy with his real mother in the environment where he was raised. Ask to see his brothers and sister, if they are still there.

See that the puppy is well socialized and has had appropriate good experiences.

Ask to see the puppy’s health records and ensure these are available by the time the puppy is purchased.

Make sure the puppy stays with its mother until a suitable age, normally until 8 weeks of age.

For pedigree puppies, ensure that any recognized registration papers and the parents’ hereditary disease certificates, where appropriate, are in order and available at the time of purchase.

The detailed set of guidelines can be found online.

The group is also considering drawing up a puppy contract to help owners and breeders at the point of sale.