

## *Pedigrees, Registration and Reputable Breeding:*

*a bit of info for the novice dog person.*

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Countless times people who are involved in the "dog world" hear statements such as: "My dog is registered so that means it should be bred." "Pedigreed dogs are always good." "If my dog is registered and pedigreed it is healthy." "All purebred dogs should be bred even if there is no pedigree. Why are they important? All they do is list the titles and I know my dog has Champions somewhere behind her, the breeder said so." "This dog is quality! See all the titles his ancestor has? I have to breed him!" "My Mom just bought an AKC Cockapoo." "The pet store said these pups were AKC so they must be registered." "Both my dogs are registered so the pups will be." "I want a purebred dog but pedigrees mean nothing so I'll get call the guy in the paper advertising them. They are cheaper than going to a 'show breeder'. I do not want a show dog anyhow,"

However, how true are these statements? Yes, pedigrees are important but do they guarantee health? Are all dogs that are registered quality? Does having registered parents mean the dog is registered? Are pedigrees important to even the person just looking for a pet? The answer to all these questions is both yes and no.

**PEDIGREES:** Basically, pedigrees are a breakdown of the parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, etc., behind a dog (or other animal). They list only a small segment of relatives in the grand scheme of things. (Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, etc. are not listed on the pedigree). It is very easy to be blinded by Champions and working titles all over the place. However, does this mean the puppy you are looking at will be quality? No.

Genetics can be funny and it is very possible for two great dogs to produce mediocre puppies. Breeding great to great increases the chances of producing great so always look for the best you can, but it is NOT a guarantee. Just because your dog is from some of the best lines in the country does not mean he or she will reproduce it. It just better the chances of it. Though a breeder has pedigrees on the dogs, does not mean the dogs are top quality. Even pet shop puppies are sold with pedigrees! Therefore, you have to know the source of your puppy and what questions to ask the breeder about the pups. Even the best breeders will end up with puppies that are not the quality they want – it is just the luck of the draw even when breeding the best dogs possible. However, these puppies will be sold with a spay/neuter agreement and even limited registrations to try to prevent the undesired traits from being bred down the road and damaging the integrity of the breed.

**PEDIGREES AND HEALTH:** Just being pedigreed does not mean a dog is healthy or does not carry for hereditary problems. A good breeder will screen for health issues such as hips, eyes and thyroid. They many even test further like BAER (hearing) and for other health issues in the breed. It is up to the breeder to do all possible to test and breed for

health. If the breeder does not test or you cannot see proof of such tests, this is not a breeder to work with. At minimum, hips and eyes should be screened. Just because a dog is a Champion does not mean it is healthy. I personally spoke to a man who was breeding a severely hip dysplastic bitch he got a champion title on before her hips became apparent. Even after she could barely walk, he kept breeding her. He felt since she was a Champion, she should be bred. He ignored the orthopedic problems he was passing on as he was blinded by the title his dog won.

It is not uncommon to hear people well versed in their breed to go over a pedigree and make comments like, "See this dog way back here? Several pups from different bitches in different lines developed eye problems. No other pups developed it. It is suspected this dog has it. This was before there was a test for the problem." And the same things goes for females: "The bitch was bred to a few dogs over the years and in each litter there was an affected pup so it is suspected she has the problem. The genetics are still unknown but none of the males have produced affected pups." A pedigree in the hands of a person who really knows the breed and what is out there can tell far more than just the parents of the pup and what titles are behind him. How does this relate for the person just wanting a pet? Well, do you want to risk buying a pet that could develop serious health issues down the road? Not all genetic problems show up at birth. Some take months or years to show up. If you do not care if your purebred has a pedigree, go to a rescue. These dogs need homes. That cheaper puppy you get from that newspaper ad may end up costing you far more financially as he grows up than the puppy from a good breeder who knows the pedigrees behind the dogs very well and also tests breeding dogs.

Please, bear in mind that not all hereditary problems have a test as of now. Epilepsy for example, has no screening but a good breeder will know if it has cropped up in the ancestry of the dogs. However, that cheap puppy from that ad probably did not come from dogs that have had testing done. Is this a risk you want to take? You can spend \$200 on a puppy and then find out it has medical problem that had the parents been tested, the person breeding would have known about. You can end up paying hundreds of dollars if not more in medical care down the road. Alternatively, would you rather spend \$800 at a reputable person who tests and knows this problem is not in the line? A cheap dog may end up being a very expensive one in a few years.

**PEDIGREES AND QUALITY:** Not all dogs with a pedigree will be breeding quality. This is just the luck of genetics. What makes a dog breeding quality? Well, in the opinion of many, myself included, it is how close the dog fits the written standard in form and function and how healthy the dog is. Is the dog clear of any health issues that can be screened for and do you know if anything is carried behind the dog and where? Does the dog have brains to go with the look? Has the dog been shown in various competitions to prove it is all around quality? Not getting out and proving a dog is quality before breeding is irresponsible. Now, what if the dog has had an accident like a bit of tail is lost but the dog is great quality and the person very experienced in the breed? Different story. This is not a genetic reason or health reason that would affect breeding. This is an accident and if the dog is of the quality desired, then this should speak for itself -

however, the breeder will still be out and showing relatives of that dog and still be involved in the dog world.

Now, there is far more to a dog than what is listed on the pedigrees. There are siblings, half-siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins. If you do not see all the working titles on a pedigree you would like, ask about other relatives. They may be out and working in various non-conformation sports quite successfully. It can be expensive and time consuming just to show a dog in one sport. Nevertheless, more and more dogs are showing up with titles at both ends of the name. Many people will get a conformation title on a dog then go into another sport. A good breeder will breed dogs with working potential. That look is nothing, in the opinions of many, if the brains and drive are not there as well.

**REGISTRATIONS:** The general public has the impression that a registered dog regardless of where it is from is a quality dog. This is far from true. A dog's quality is only as good as the *integrity* of the person breeding it. Though registries such as the American Kennel Club, The United Kennel Club, the American Rare Breed Association and the Canadian Kennel Club (or what ever national registry is in your country) encourage ethical breeding, it is impossible to get out and inspect all breeders. A back yard breeder or puppy miller can register a litter just as the best breeder in the country can.

**REGISTERING PUPPIES:** just because the parents are registered, does not automatically mean the puppies are registered. Many registries have forms the breeder has to fill out when the breeding was done and when the puppies are whelped. The litter is registered. As each puppy not kept goes to a home, the new owners are given a form to fill out and send back within an allotted time to register the puppy. In addition, some registries have some type of limited registration. This means that the dog can compete in all sports BUT conformation (depending on the registry). Should the dog be bred, ALL offspring will be ineligible for registration. Another thing to beware of is the person who does not register saying that it is too expensive to register a litter. The fees are nominal in comparison to the overall cost of raising the litter. Chances are, the parents are not registered or have limited registrations. If a breeder cannot afford the fees to register, they cannot afford to breed.

**REGISTRATION DECEPTIONS:** Are the puppies AKC registerable or is the store/ad just advertising puppies that are of breeds recognized by the AKC (or UKC or whatever reputable registry is in your country)? The same thing goes for back yard breeders. I often see things like AKC/UKC puppies for sale. This could mean simply that the breed is one recognized by the AKC or UKC. The puppies may not be registered at all, just of breeds recognized.

Remember, having registered parents does not automatically mean the puppies are registered. If you see something like AKC/UKC Cockapoos, this is wrong. The AKC and UKC do not recognize any of the "poo" dogs, as they are ultimately crosses regardless of what you will be told. One registry is gaining favor with puppy millers and people who

breed for the wrong reasons. The Continental Kennel Club has come under fire by registries and reputable breeders for encouraging unethical breeding practices. The Continental Kennel Club will register anything and encourages people to create designer crosses (like the "poo" dogs or other neat sounding mutts) just for the sake of the buck. They hold now shows and often the standards are very vague. There is even one cross that is a cross of two TOY breeds that they classify as a herding breed. How ethical is this?

Many a time I have gotten an e-mail from a person looking at Continental Kennel Club pups. When I asked them to research the breeder, it was discovered the breeder had been suspended from the AKC or UKC. In addition, if you see CKC pups, find out if the pups are Canadian Kennel Club or Continental Kennel Club. The use of CKC by some breeders is done purposefully to make people think it is the Canadian one! In actuality, it may be Continental. There are also other registries cropping up that intentionally use initials that can confuse the buyer with other registries. Again, research the breeder well.

To repeat: registration means nothing if the breeder is not breeding for the good of the breed. A good breeder proves their dogs are quality through competitions and even if they cannot do all sports the dog is capable of, loves it when relatives of the dog gain various titles. It proves that the drive in the line is there. In order to compete in sports, the dogs must be registered. Even the person breeding the worst breed specimens in the world can register the puppies if the parents are fully registered.

Now, let us look at what makes a responsible breeder and some breeding myths.

### **WHAT MAKES A GOOD BREEDER?**

Knows the history behind their dogs to the best of their abilities. Many tests are new so if the dogs were alive and died before the test was developed, there can be some ambiguity. However, a good breeder will know all they can about the background and strive to ensure that only healthy dogs who well represent the breed in form and function will reproduce.

Tests the health of dogs being used for stud or brood bitch and insists the same to all dogs breeding to.

Has a working knowledge of the genetics behind the dogs (such as color genetics and health).

Tries to prove the dogs have both form and function.

All dogs will be registered. Those pups that are not show/breeding potential and if not kept, will have a limited registration (if applicable to the registry) and be sold with a spay/neuter contract to help keep undesired traits from passing on.

The breeder breeds quality to get quality and not quantity to get quality.

The breeder does not breed designer crosses such as "poo" dogs or anything else that is truly a cross-bred but has a catchy name deceiving the public that it is pure. It takes many, many generations to get genes to breed pure and many years to prove a new breed has been developed.

The breeder has a set goal to improve not only their animals but also to help improve the quality of what is out there.

Does not breed just to produce pets for the general public. A good breeder breeds first for his goals and those not fitting the desired type will be sold as pets or performance only dogs.