

Purebred or Crossbred

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Purebred or crossbred, what is the best? Take a random sampling and you will get a variety of answers. Some will be intelligent while others will be based on old information now proven false. Some people will be vehemently one way or the other, while some will say it is personal choice. Let us look closer at this as it applies to the world of dogs.

Purebred dogs have a standard that describes the ideal dog for the job it was bred to do. Due to specific breeding for certain traits, when one dog of a breed is bred to another dog of the same breed, you will only get dogs with those traits – that breed. This is why when you breed Great Dane to a Great Dane you will not get Chihuahuas. With purebreds, you have far better idea of what to expect in terms of size, colors, temperament and health. Yes, genetics are funny and you can get dogs that are too big or too small, but in general, you know what to expect especially if you use a good breeder.

There are also myths about purebreds. Possibly the most common one is that purebreds are unhealthy and have bad temperaments. This is not true. However, I need to qualify this. If you go to a reputable breeder who knows the health issues in the breed and breeds carefully so as not to pass them on, you stand a better chance of getting a healthy dog. If you go to any Tom, Dick or Mary who breeds because they have a couple purebred dogs, or go to a pet shop, you have a greater chance of getting a dog with problems. A good breeder will do all possible can to breed for soundness, type, and temperament and prove this by showing. If a health problem crops up in your dog, they will want to know so they can try to find where it came from and alter the breeding program. Purebred dogs from good sources have no more temperament issues than crossbreds. The quality of the dog is based on the integrity of the breeder. In addition, a good breeder will never breed crosses. Why? There is no standard to judge what is best by and crossing does not better a breed. It just puts more pet dogs out there without purpose. Moreover, with all those who do not spay or neuter and having accidental litters, there are more than enough crosses!

Crossbred dogs are wonderful. I own one. However, with crosses, you have less to go by when determining the outcome. My Hunter is half Australian Shepherd and half Newfoundland. When I adopted him as an adolescent, Hunter was already far larger than the average Aussie – but smaller than the average Newf. We would not know just how big he could get for another year or so. He was almost done with upward growth, but bulking out can go for a year or two after upward growth has stopped. Luckily, he topped out in the mid to upper seventies! As for temperament: another guess. Aussies are very driven and high energy on the average. Newfs are more laid back. They can be energetic but nowhere near an Aussie. When Hunter matured, he could be big and goofy,

medium sized and goofy, big and laid back or medium sized and laid back. All we knew was he would be a larger dog and hairy.

Hunter is now somewhere between seven and eight years old. He took after the Aussie in temperament. Even as a senior dog, Hunter has more energy and drive than the average family is willing to endure. He is a big dog and very strong. He also has medical issues. Yes, a cross. You may ask about hybrid vigor as has been touted by many people over the years. Well, in order to be a true hybrid, you must cross two different species like a lion and a tiger or domestic dog and wolf. Domestic dogs are ALL THE SAME SPECIES. Just like all the breeds of domestic cat are the same species. All domestic rabbits are the same species. In addition, there are MANY health issues common to most breeds of dog.

Hunter has hip dysplasia. There was also a concern about an eye issue. Since most people breeding crosses do not do the extensive health screenings a good breeder of purebred will, you stand as great a chance of getting a cross with an inherited problem as you do a purebred. In fact, when I look back over the twenty years I have worked with dogs, I have seen just about an even split between crosses and purebred in terms of health issues. The difference is when a purebred was from a GOOD breeder, I saw fewer health issues than if the dog was from a pet shop or Back Yard Breeder (one who breeds dogs just because he can without care for form, function or health and who often will not go out and prove the breeding stock is quality).

If you are looking for a dog for competing in certain sports, you may need a purebred – but not necessarily. If you show in the AKC, regardless of sport, the dog has to be purebred from a breeder or rescue. The UKC (United Kennel Club) will recognize crossbreds (that have been spayed or neutered) for all competitions except conformation (the breed ring).

The choice of purebred or crossbred is personal. If you are willing to accept that you do not know the background of a crossbred and that small pup you like may turn out a lot larger than first suspected (or even a lot smaller than hoped), find a good rescue and adopt a mutt, if you want predictability and something very specific, then go for a purebred.