

Selecting aBreeder

Selecting a breeder is clearly one of the most important steps in the process of finding the right puppy for you and your family. Many times, it will create the type of foundation for the experience you will have during the many years of Vizsla ownership. It can be one of support and friendship during years of happy and enjoyable ownership of your Vizsla. Or, it can be little contact and assistance during times filled with questions, problems, and potential health issues.

We can attest to its importance due to the support and relationship we have developed with the breeder of our two Vizslas. Access to their experience, knowledge, and even assistance has been valuable since 2004, when we first acquired Nasdaq, our male and two years later Penny, our female. Most importantly, we now have exactly what was promised by our breeder when we picked up Nasdaq and Penny, two champions who are very much a part of our lives and experiencing excellent health.

With access to the Internet, the days of locating a puppy through 'local' classifieds is over. While the Internet has broadened access to products and knowledge, it has also enabled the more deceitful to impact many individuals well beyond their own neighborhoods. The ability to purchase one brand of tool or clothing 20 or 30% less from one Internet provider than another no longer raises any questions or concerns. This is because for this type of merchandise we can rely upon manufacturing standards. Regardless of the source, we have confidence of the quality and benefit we will experience. However, when animals are involved, support, assistance and the animal's health all comes from the breeder, or can be missing if the wrong breeder is selected.

The Concern

Puppy Mills - Do they exist and are the horror stories real? According to the Humane Society of the United States, Puppy Mills are breeding facilities that produce purebred puppies in large numbers. They sell to the public via the Internet, local ads, and through brokers and pet shops. The problems are real and have been documented. They include over breeding, inbreeding, poor veterinary care, poor quality food and shelter, lack of human socialization, overcrowded cages, and the killing of unwanted animals. For the unwitting consumer, this frequently results in buying a puppy facing an array of immediate veterinary problems, a temperament not common to the Vizsla, or harboring genetic diseases that surface years later.

Breeds such as the Vizsla or others that are also uncommon can often be the target of Puppy Mills. The Mill can price their puppies below that of a high quality puppy and yet be substantially higher than puppies of more common breeds, thus very lucrative for the Puppy Mill. For the consumer, it can appear the dedicated and quality breeder is arrogant and snobbish about selling their puppies. By asking all of those personal questions, the dedicated and passionate breeder is attempting to find the best home for the few puppies they breed each year; rather than the Puppy Mill owner who is eager to sell one more puppy and pocket the four to eight hundred dollars from a quick sale.

Unfortunately, there is no flashing sign that says "I Am a Puppy Mill"! In fact, many Mills proclaim loudly they are not a 'Puppy Mill'! Through the Internet, they often can hide behind nice web sites or well-meaning ads. To determine whether you might be dealing with a Puppy Mill or not, there are several key questions you might ask.

How many litters does the breeder sell each year? More than 3 or 4 litters could raise suspicion.

Does the breeder handle more than two breeds or represent other breeders for a fee? If the breeder handles four or more breeds or represents others for a fee and many are uncommon breeds, this should raise suspicion.

How many litters has the Dam produced and at what age was her first litter? If the first litter for a Vizsla was under the age of 2 or if she has had 5 or more litters, clearly this should raise suspicion.

Has the breeder tested their Dam and Sire against diseases and has this information been provided to you as a prospective buyer? As well as veterinary records on the puppies?

As a potential owner, does the breeder provide an initial health guarantee and a long-term guarantee against hereditary diseases or structural deficiencies such as hip dysplasia?

Has the breeder DNA tested their Dam and Sire and provided the results as confirmation of the purebred status of the puppy?

AKC registration is not a seal of approval, nor does it offer certainty of quality or that the puppy is healthy. The AKC does NOT certify any breeder's operation or animals. The AKC does offer certified pedigrees, but all this means the lineage is correct, nothing more. Breeders touting this as their strong suit or that the AKC has certified their animals, and not their affiliation with national or local breed associations and their participation in conformation, obedience, agility, or field events may be a suspected Puppy Mill. You should consider another source.

For breeders unable to AKC register their puppies for any number of reasons, many have turned to a questionable registry, American Purebred Registry (APR). This relatively new organization appears to be created for the sole purpose of permitting breeders to register their dogs or puppies thus permitting them to charge a higher price. The APR does not require proof of the claims made by the breeder thus they are not providing any protection or certainty to the buying public. If the breeder is claiming APR registered dogs, to be certain of the puppy's heritage and health, it may be best to locate another breeder through the AKC or the National Kennel Club of the breed you are seeking.

Does the breeder place lone importance on the puppy having a pedigree? Any puppy born has a pedigree, though it may not be very desirable. Most dedicated breeders will be able to provide a four or five generation pedigree for any litter they bred. And, upon review for dedicated Vizsla breeders, you should see many champions (CH), dual champions (DC), amateur field champions (AFC), junior or senior or master hunters (JH, SH, MH), as well as many titles for obedience and agility. The lack of titles among the parents, grandparents, great grandparents, aunts and uncles should raise the question as to "why" the litter was bred.

For TopStock Vizsla Kennels, the breeding of Penny to Flynn was our first litter. We waited three years for this breeding to occur, during which Penny earned her conformation championship, as well as two beginning field titles. We also made certain her hips could be certified by OFA once she reached two years of age and DNA tested her. With the assistance of two very capable breeders, we sought a sire that would complement Penny and potentially enhance the breed. Two years later, we bred Penny to Ozzy. Once again, we complemented Penny's qualities with Ozzy's field expertise. Now, one year later, we were lucky to meet the owners of Cutter and we both agreed the potential from this breeding could be exceptional. Again, we sought qualities in the sire which would complement or strengthen our female.

We are eager to find quality homes for these puppies and we are looking for families interested in Vizslas for their skills and personalities. We hope to find a few families willing to show those puppies of show quality, as well as enter field events. Doing so helps us confirm the quality of our breeding program for future puppy purchasers. We are also eager to hear of the accomplishments through the years of each male and female from this litter.