

TIPS WHEN SEARCHING FOR A BREEDER

(Written by Beth Downey, Amity Hall Boxers)

1. Will the Breeder be there for me if I need them?

When searching for a Reputable Breeder, you will need to interview each Breeder carefully to determine if you are comfortable with their knowledge and ethics. A Reputable Breeder is someone who will be there for you throughout your dog's life should you ever have a question or need advice. A Reputable Breeder will also stand behind their dogs through a contract (terms will vary). If you feel unsure or uncomfortable with a Breeder, follow your instincts and stay away. A Reputable Breeder is knowledgeable, caring and will be more than happy to answer any questions you may have concerning the breed and their breeding practices.

2. Does the Breeder perform health testing?

One of the most prevalent health issues plaguing the Boxer breed, in addition to cancer, is heart disease. A Reputable Boxer Breeder will have ensured the sire and dam of their litter of puppies have both been heart tested by a Board Certified Veterinary Cardiologist by way of an Echo Doppler and 24 Hour Holter Monitor. Some breeders only Echo or only Holter but both tests are equally important. The Echo Doppler is a painless test that is part of a transthoracic echocardiogram (cardiac ultrasound), which shows how the heart beats and pumps blood. The Doppler analyzes the direction and velocity of the blood that flows through the heart and can identify subaortic stenosis (SAS), detect Cardiomyopathy in its more advanced stage, as well as locate other defects and diseases of the heart. The 24 Hour Holter Monitor is a 24 hour EKG that can detect abnormalities in heart function and is utilized to diagnose Cardiomyopathy. SAS and Cardiomyopathy are the two most common heart issues found in the Boxer breed.

Another important test a Boxer Breeder should ensure is performed on the sire and dam of their puppies is Thyroid Testing. Low thyroid is an issue that can affect

boxers which is treatable through medication and can be easily checked through a T4 blood test.

Ask the Breeder if they have copies of the health test results should you want to view them. Keep in mind that there is never a 100% guarantee a puppy won't be affected with a genetic problem even if the sire and dam has been cleared but buying a puppy from a health tested parents will better ensure the odds your puppy will be not be affected with these issues.

3. What about the temperaments of the sire and dam?

If possible, meet the sire and dam of the puppies you are considering. The temperament of a Boxer should be friendly and not aggressive or shy towards strangers. Some Boxers may be somewhat wary or protective when you first arrive but should quickly warm up to you. Just be prepared for those Boxer kisses and their excitable energy that can be unexpectedly, but lovingly, offered to greet your arrival.

It may not always be possible to meet the sire of the litter if the Breeder has used a stud dog from another area. If this is the case, ask the Breeder about the personality and temperament of the sire, or you can ask the Breeder to put you in contact with the sire's owner.

Temperament is very important to consider when breeding a litter and aggressive or shy Boxers should never be bred. Boxers with anxiety issues also should never be bred. The temperament of the sire and dam can be an indication as to what the temperament of their puppies may be like.

4. What are the living conditions like?

Check out the living conditions of the Breeder's puppies and adult Boxers. All of their Boxers should be living inside and not outdoors. Boxers are not outside dogs. They cannot tolerate extreme cold or heat and they crave human companionship. Check the area where the dogs are kept for general cleanliness, space, and the overall condition of the living area. Take notice as to whether or not the Breeder's dogs appear to be healthy and well cared for.

5. Is the Breeder breeding for the right reasons?

Ask the Breeder how long they have been breeding Boxers and whether they belong to a Boxer Club or an AKC All Breed Club. Ask the Breeder if they show their dogs and ask them why they decided to become involved in breeding. Some of the answers you DO NOT want to hear as reasons for breeding are: "to make extra money", "because we love our boxer so much we wanted another just like him/her", "because we just really like boxers", "to have our children experience birth", or anything else along that line. A Reputable Breeder is breeding for the best interest of the breed as a whole: to preserve, protect and improve the breed through their breeding practices by breeding healthy, well tempered, quality Boxers.

6. How often and what age are the Breeder's boxers being bred?

Ask the Breeder how often they breed their Boxers and at what age they start breeding. A female Boxer should not be bred until she is close to 2 years of age at the earliest. Before the age of 2 years, most female Boxers are still too much of a puppy themselves to handle the responsibility of raising a litter. A good Breeder will be able to determine when their female Boxer is both mentally and physically mature enough to breed. The most litters a female Boxer should produce in her lifetime are 3 or 4 and she should not be bred older than 6 years of age.

7. What if the Breeder is put off by my asking questions?

If a Breeder is put off by your questions, then I strongly recommend you go somewhere else. They may not like your questions because they have something to hide or they may not be the type of Breeder who is easy to talk to. Don't be afraid to ask the Breeder for references from people who have purchased puppies from them in the past. Any reputable Breeder would be more than happy share this information with you.

I personally prefer people who ask questions because it shows me they are more likely to be serious in their commitment to take on the responsibility of raising and caring for a Boxer puppy.

8. Should the Breeder ask me questions?

You can recognize a reputable Breeder by the questions they ask you. They should be just as inquisitive as you are and may require an application or questionnaire to be filled out if you are interested in purchasing one of their puppies. A good Breeder has a sincere interest in where their puppies are placed and how they will be cared for as opposed to placing a puppy with the first person that shows up at the door with money in hand. As a result, a Reputable Breeder may ask for references, require a home visit, and want to meet all of the family members in the home prior to placing a puppy with you.

9. What kind of agreement and paperwork should I expect?

Most Reputable Breeders will have a contract when they sell a puppy. The purpose of the contract when selling a pet puppy is mainly to protect the best interest of the puppy. The contract will usually include any health guarantee offered, return and refund conditions, and your agreement to keep your Boxer current on vaccinations, health care, etc. The Breeder should also provide you with a copy of a health certificate from their veterinarian, copy of the pedigree, and registration papers if the puppy is agreed to be registered. Some puppies will not be given a registration to you by the Breeder until the puppy is spayed or neutered. Most good Breeders will also include in their contract an agreement to take a Boxer of their breeding back at any age should you find you can no longer care for the Boxer. This prevents dogs of their breeding from being turned into shelters or rescue groups which are already inundated with dogs needing homes.

10. What if the puppies are all really cute and appear healthy but I am not comfortable with the Breeder?

If you are at all personally uncomfortable with the Breeder, the condition of the Breeder's dogs (adults and/or puppies), the living area of the dogs, or anything else about the Breeder or their Boxers, then I strongly urge you to follow your gut instinct and look elsewhere. A good Breeder will be well worth the wait, time and effort you take to research them!