

## Advice about Breeders "Caveat emptor"

If you are thinking about buying a puppy, you will naturally want one with a good temperament who will adapt happily to life as part of the family. One of the most important factors involved in achieving this is to buy from a specialist, reputable breeder. On the following pages, you will find advice on what to look for when contacting breeders and the warning signs that indicate a breeder is not reputable.

The popularity of our breed has meant that some breeders produce large numbers of puppies purely for commercial gain which is not in the best interests of the breed - such breeders often pay little regard to the health or temperament of their puppies & they will sell a pup to whoever wants one, no questions asked. Many of these pups are taken away from their mothers at an early age & are transported long distances to be placed on sale in pet shops & puppy supermarkets - these pups often have health problems & sadly may have poor temperaments. Some of these breeders, commonly called "puppy farmers" operate outside the law & keep their dogs in appalling conditions; their pups may or may not be registered with the Kennel Club. Other commercial breeders may be fully licensed & register their pups with the Kennel Club - they also may place enticing adverts in the local press, but this does not mean they are reputable!

### Reputable Breeders Do.....

- **Have** a serious interest in their breed - they often take part in activities with their dogs such as showing, obedience training/ trialling agility, etc. All reputable breeders will generally be a member of their Breed Club.
- **Try** to ensure that any puppies they breed go only to the most suitable homes. They will ask as many questions of you as you should be asking of them. If a breeder does not ask you any questions at all, ask yourself why they apparently don't care what sort of homes their puppies go to?
- **Understand** that breeding & rearing a litter of puppies with care takes enormous effort & commitment & therefore only have a few litters a year which will be carefully planned with health & temperament as top priorities. They will make every effort to ensure that puppies are well-socialised before they leave for new homes (something that is impossible to do if the breeder has numerous litters at the same time)
- **Willingly** offer advice on the breed to potential buyers even if they do not have a litter & will honestly discuss the breed's requirements (e.g. grooming, exercise ) & any hereditary problems that are known to occur in the breed (e.g. Hip or Elbow Dysplasia, etc)
- **Provide** back-up help & advice on a long-term basis to their puppy buyers. They will also make clear that if the owner of one of their puppies is unable to keep the dog for any reason, then they will take back that dog & find it a new home.
- **Provide** puppy buyers with all the necessary paperwork at the time the puppy is collected. This will include a copy of the pedigree, a diet sheet, worming certificate & VCA Registration Certificate. Many will also provide comprehensive information on grooming, training etc
- **Insist** potential puppy buyers meet their dogs, including "Mum", all the puppies in the litter & possibly other relatives too. If all the breeders' dogs seem happy & pleased to "meet & greet" visitors, then this is a good indication that a puppy from this breeder will have a happy, outgoing temperament.

### Reputable Breeders Do Not.....

- Sell puppies under the age of 8 weeks
- Breed puppies purely for financial gain
- Sell to agents/dealers/pet shops/puppy supermarkets or sell to buyers they have not met personally and screened for suitability. If you are unable to meet the Mother of the litter, then this indicates the seller is not the breeder & is most likely to be a dealer.
- Have more than one or two litters at the same time or advertise multiple litters from a variety of popular breeds (those who do are clearly commercial breeders or dealers)
- Offer to deliver puppies to buyers (unless in exceptional circumstances) or offer to meet potential buyers in locations other than Breeder's Residence. Puppy farmers often use these tactics to prevent buyers from seeing the conditions in which puppies have been born
- Charge buyers extra if they want a puppy with VCA registration
- Sell puppies without VCA Registration. "There is no such thing as a "pedigreed dog without papers", because the registration papers ARE the pedigree, and proof of the pups breeding heritage."
- Claim the breed has no hereditary problems, this is a fallacy. As far as I know no-one has bred the "perfect dog" yet.
- Go for the "hard sell" approach & try to persuade enquirers to buy one of their puppies as quickly as possible, "before they all go!"
- Many people believe that VCA Registration gives a guarantee that a puppy has come from a reputable breeder & will grow into a healthy, happy example of its breed. Sadly this is not the case. The VCA will register any litter of puppies as long as both parents are KC registered and have had their hips & elbows x-rayed (the parent's do not have to pass Hip & Elbow X-rays, just have had the hips /elbows checked.) There are a few limitations preventing registration if the dam (mother) is younger or older than a specified age or if she has already whelped a certain number of litters but apart from that, anything goes! Many commercial breeders & known puppy farmers register their litters with the VCA because they know it gives them a certain "respectability" in the eyes of the general public. Having said that, all reputable breeders also use the Kennel Club system so it pays to view with extreme caution litters that are advertised as unregistered or "puppies sold without papers".

**NB:** If you want to become involved in showing dogs, then your puppy **must** be VCA registered. Also, if you want to breed from your dog & register puppies with the VCA, then your dog must be KVCA registered. Also remember that **ONLY** owners of VCA registered dogs can use the hip-scoring & eye-testing schemes (unregistered dogs are not eligible for these health-screening schemes)

### Here are a few guidelines to help in your search for a Reputable Breeder

- First, remember that price is not everything! Puppies are not like household commodities where you can shop around for the "best deal". Reputable breeders do not sell their puppies cheaply & whilst it might be tempting to respond to an advert offering puppies at less than the "going rate", the puppy may not be such a bargain in the long run. On the other hand, a high asking price is not necessarily a guarantee of quality either!

- **Next**, be patient! Reputable breeders do not have a constant supply of puppies & it may be that potential buyers will have to wait weeks, perhaps months for a suitable litter to be born. Mistakes are often made by buyers who will not wait ... they want a puppy **NOW** & so will often rush out & buy in haste (perhaps ignoring the warning signs that the breeder is not reputable). Remember, you will hopefully have your puppy for 10-15 years - what is a wait of a few months for the "right" puppy compared to this?
- **Never** buy a puppy because you feel sorry for it, either because it appears shy & fearful or because you are unhappy with the conditions it is being reared in. This is a recipe for disaster - you could end up with a puppy with severe health & temperament problems (& you will be helping less reputable breeders stay in business)
- **Never** buy a puppy from a retail outlet (pet store/puppy supermarket) where you are unable to meet the Mother of the litter or talk to the breeder directly. Remember reputable breeders **NEVER** sell puppies to puppy supermarkets/pet shops

#### **Here are some suggestions on how to find a Reputable Breeder.**

- **Breed Clubs** are a good place to start your search. The Secretaries of each Club should be able to recommend breeders who maybe have puppies available or who are expecting a litter. Contact numbers for all the Breed Clubs can be found on the Kennel Club's website.
- **The German Shepherd Dog Club** have a Puppy Listings Officer. The list contains registered Breeders who have registered puppies. Please note that the GSDCV does not guarantee that breeders on this list are reputable - potential buyers should not assume this & should ascertain for themselves whether a breeder listed is the kind they would be happy to buy a puppy from.
- **Many dog-related web sites** have listings for breeders. However, enquirers should not assume a breeder is reputable because their name appears on an internet listing – "puppy farmers" can also be found on these lists.

#### **What is a Puppy Mill?**

**A puppy mill** is a place where lots of dogs are being bred for the primary purpose of resale. There are generally lots of breeds, although some places only have a few breeds. The breeders breed for profit and generally sell to brokers or pet stores, but some do occasionally sell to the public. Bitches are generally bred every time they come into heat. Puppy mills usually have puppies available at any given time. No regards for the dogs or puppies health. No regards for the standard for the breed.

#### **What is a Backyard Breeder?**

Definitions of a Backyard Breeder

A Backyard Breeder is a Person or Persons.....

- **Who** casually breeds purebred dogs with little or no regard to the breed standard, genetically linked defects or temperament.
- **Who** practices random or ignorant dog breeding on a small scale. The name is something of a misnomer, as many excellent breeders run small-scale programs in their houses, garages, barns, or backyards
- **Who** breeds unregistered pedigreed animals and sells them as pure bred without papers
- **Who** is looking to make a fast dollar
- **Who** will undercut the price of registered breeders considerably

- **Who** does not care who buys the puppies they have bred or for what purpose the puppies have been bought
- **Who** lets the puppies go before they have to spend money on worming , vaccinations, or Veterinary health checks
- **Who** offers no contracts or guarantees as to the health of the puppy
- **Who** does not take any information about the puppy buyer
- **Who** is extremely unlikely to have cared for the parents of the puppy or for that matter had the parents tested for any kind of genetic disease before breeding
- **Who** has no thought or care to good companion animal husbandry
- **Who** will place their puppies for sale in pet shops or hand them over to “Dealers” who will have no regard for the welfare of the puppy

**I** have included a letter from Mary & Luke about the problems they encountered when they bought Alfie from a backyard breeder.

**We** were forever bonded to the German Shepherd Dog as a breed following our experience with Harley, who lived a healthy and happy life for 15 years. A few months after Harley's passing, Alfie joined our family. Alfie was a little over 3 months when he came home and he seemed to be a healthy and happy puppy & fitted in with our 'menagerie' immediately. Alfie had been purchased from a 'backyard breeder'. You see, we never wanted to breed we just love our dogs and they enjoy us too it seems.


**Over** time, it became evident that he was a little different than most GSD's. His ears never stood up; consequently he suffered from constant & quite painful ear infections. He had a major operation at 6 months of age to remove double dew claws. This was an extremely painful operation which required 3 weeks of visits to the vet to re dress the wounds & for many weeks after the wounds required constant attention. We loved him all the same, and didn't mind in the least that he was a little unique.

**Early** in 2005, we moved from the Melbourne to Bendigo. We now have a couple of acres of land and had joined the local German Shepherd Dog Club – Bendigo Branch. It was there that we met Noreen Symes. You see, with our new found space and surroundings, we decided we would be able to have another German Shepherd Dog and provide a loving and secure home for her. Also, we felt Alfie would benefit greatly with some company when we were working.

**Bella** (Llacfarra Harmony) joined our family in April 2005 at approx 4 months of age. She was purchased on Breeders Terms from Noreen Symes who, despite Bella's beautiful conformation, was reluctantly looking for a good home for her as she had developed a "stock coat" & was not suitable for the Show Ring. It was an extremely reluctant sale from Noreen who simply adored her girl as she does all of her babies. This was, however, our lucky day! Bella has a beautiful temperament, is highly intelligent & displays a willingness to learn. She has become an extremely important & spoiled member of our family. Bella is healthy and happy & recent X-rays revealed she has excellent hips with not a sign of any debilitating issues.

**Of** course, Bella and Alfie became fast friends and were inseparable until Alfie began to display intermittent lameness and had difficulty running & getting up at times. It turned out that Alfie had chronic hip dysplasia. He had to be euthanatized in June 2005. He was just 15 months of age. Our family was devastated; this was almost 1 yr to the day that we had to have Harley euthanized. We could not locate the breeder to advise of the problems experienced. We often wonder how his siblings have fared. You see, this was a backyard breeder; he had little interest in the welfare of the puppies he sold, his only interest was the \$\$\$. I wonder how many other families have had to go through this heartbreaking experience. These breeders need to be stopped.

**From** the 1st day we met Noreen through to today, we have enjoyed her support & her knowledge. She shed tears with us when she learned of Alfie's fate & is always interested in



news of Bella and her progress. Her advice on feeding regimes and new information on all aspects of dog ownership is invaluable. She is always sending emails & we see her frequently at the GSDC- Bendigo Branch. Bella becomes extremely excited each time she sees Noreen, she instantly recognises her each time they meet & offers her lots of kisses & quite a bit of chatter.

**S**o, despite his protests of 'no more dogs' following Alfie's sad end, Luke recently decided he was ready for a new addition to the family. The decision as to which breeder we would go to was already made. He had said, ever since Bella joined our family, that he would only go to Noreen from Kazkiri Kennels should we ever decide to get another Shepherd.

**B**arney has been home now for 3 weeks. He was the smallest puppy in the litter and was virtually hand reared by Noreen and Larna. Barney had to come home a week earlier than anticipated, you see his siblings were bossing him relentlessly and the decision to send him home early was a difficult but well meaning one. We all believed that for him to stay on a further week or longer would be disastrous for his well being. Health wise, Barney had a rocky first 8 days when he first came home. Throughout this time, Noreen helped us daily with advice and support. She spoke directly with the vet and translated the diagnosis for us. She incurred the costs associated with any treatment. Noreen called daily checking on his wellbeing and her support during this time was simply amazing. She truly is a wonderful ambassador for the breed and the GSDC of Vic. I am happy to say that Barney is doing extremely well, he is putting on weight and doing all the good things that puppies are meant to do.

**B**ella mothers Barney constantly, I am certain she feels he is her baby. Both are doing wonderfully well together, they have beautiful temperaments and are bright and energetic. Bella is particularly patient and protective and both are very much loved.

**O**ur recommendation you see, goes beyond the standard type. Naturally, we highly recommend Kazkiri Kennels and Noreen is absolutely wonderful to deal with beyond the purchase of your dog.

**O**ur warnings to all who are about to buy a German Shepherd Dog is about the danger of getting your dog from a backyard breeder.

**P**lease **NEVER** buy a dog from a backyard breeder or a pet shop; the consequences to both the dog and your family are far more likely to be devastating. I sincerely believe if we can reduce the demand for these pups then perhaps these breeders may stop breeding from unsuitable dogs – eventually.

**I**f you are considering a German Shepherd Dog, you simply must buy from a reputable breeder. We highly recommend speaking with Noreen at Kazkiri Kennels.

**P**lease feel free to contact either Luke or Mary directly after hours on 03 5449 3063 should you wish to discuss any part of this information.

**A**nd lastly, a huge Thank you to Noreen and Alan from Kazkiri Kennels – you make the experience of owning these wonderful creatures even more enjoyable.