

that Doggy in the Window?

We've all been victims. You walk past the pet shop on the way to the shoe store. You're not looking for a puppy. You don't really even want a puppy. But there's just something about those cute brown eyes, or that pitiful facial expression, that you can't resist. Have you ever wondered where all of those puppies come from? Sadly, many of them are products of puppy farms or "commercial breeders". Basically, a puppy farm is any establishment that produces dogs on a large scale for profit. There is little, or more often, no, regard as to the quality of the puppies. The puppies are shipped around the country to pet stores and weekend markets much like livestock, then delivered to unsuspecting consumers who think that they are getting a high quality puppy just because it cost them a lot of money.

So, what's the concern? Does it really matter where your puppy comes from? Well, in the old "nature vs. nurture" argument, puppy farms consistently fall short. The sires and dams are unlikely to have been screened for genetic defects. Reputable breeders of purebred dogs try very hard to breed dogs that are genetically sound. Reputable breeders also strive to improve the breed by choosing only those animals that meet the acceptable breed standards. And remember that breeders of good quality dogs won't have to resort to third parties to sell their dogs. In fact, most have prospective owners lined up before their dog is even bred.

As important as genetics are, the environment is also critical to the social development of the young puppy. Studies have shown that puppies learn most of their social skills before they are 10 or 12 weeks old. Puppies born and raised in a large-scale operation are not given the interaction and training that is so vital for them to grow up to be sociable, confident, and well-adjusted adults. Good breeders will expose their puppies to a variety of situations and people. These pups are much less likely to be nervous or timid around strangers or unfamiliar surroundings.

If you are committed to getting a purebred dog, do some research on the breeds you are considering. The Canine Control Council has summaries and descriptions of all of the recognized breeds. Then look for a breeder. Your best bet will be to attend some dog shows where your breed will be exhibited. Ask questions. Check the mother dog yourself and the father dog if possible.

Buying a dog brings a long term responsibility and is a serious purchase. Make sure you make the right one.

Kind Regards,
Scott and Chris