

Choosing a Reputable Breeder

(Reprinted from the Airedale Terrier Club of America at www.airedale.org)

You have decided the Airedale Terrier is the dog for you. What's your next move? What steps should you take to insure that your pup meets your expectations to become all the things you want him or her to be? This purchase should receive thoughtful consideration. It's not a loaf of bread you're buying, after all. This little bundle of energy will be a member of your family for a decade or more.

Choosing a reputable source for your puppy is primary to your objective. Since it is almost impossible for you, the buyer, to know what any of the puppies will grow into physically and emotionally, you must rely entirely upon your faith in the person from whom you are purchasing your pup. There are three options open to you in choosing this person:

Pet Shop or Dealer -- The worst possible choice. Pups may be poorly bred and raised. They are usually thought of as merchandise -- the loaf of bread mentioned earlier -- to be sold for a high profit. This high profit is possible because little has been put into the care of these pups. Many may be sickly. Pet shops rely heavily on impulse buying which is no way to choose an addition to the family.

Backyard Breeder -- Also a poor choice. This person owns a pet Airedale and thinks it would be "fun" to have puppies or maybe that it would be a great experience for the kids. Even worse, perhaps it's being done to make money. Frequently this breeder knows little about the breed history or the accepted breed standard and knows even less about grooming and care. Backyard breeders almost never x-ray hips. They are usually not aware of breed problems and often do not care. Their goal is to produce pups and to sell them quickly.

Hobby Breeder -- The best choice. The serious and dedicated hobby breeder regards his dogs as just that a hobby. He does not expect a profit. When someone breeds dogs for the enjoyment, pleasure and "thrill" of producing the very finest possible specimens of the breed, rather than for profit, the result is superior quality. These breeders acknowledge responsibility for each puppy produced and stand behind every dog they breed.

Unequivocally, your choice should be from the ranks of the hobby breeder. It is an interesting fact that poor quality pups from pet shops and backyard breeders are usually sold for the same price, and sometimes even more, than quality pups purchased from serious hobby breeders. All three types of breeders sell puppies that can be registered with the AKC, but registration is neither an assurance of quality nor an indication of dedication to the breed. The question is, how does one recognize the serious, dedicated hobby breeder? While the list below identifies many of the attributes and characteristics of the serious hobby breeder, almost no breeder will have all of these. Do not be afraid to ask questions or to confront a prospective source with these

requirements. It is your right and you can rest assured that a dedicated and reputable breeder will respond positively and with pride. If your breeder meets all of these qualifications, you're in good hands.

Finally, don't be impulsive. Keep in mind that you will pay for quality no matter where your puppy comes from. Whether or not you get it is up to you.

Your breeder should belong to the Airedale Terrier Club of America, a local Airedale Terrier Club or a local all-breed club. Ideally, he or she belongs to all three, and possibly other organizations as well, although, sometimes not all the options will be available to them. Usually, participation in dog clubs indicates depth of involvement. The breeder is exposed to other points of view, learns more about their breed, general dog care, modern breeding practices and is kept up to date. Frequently they will be breeding in accordance with a club "code of ethics."

Your breeder should be involved in some form of sanctioned dog competition. This means your breeder is not breeding in a vacuum. The breeder who does not show may have no idea how good his dogs really are and is deprived of the opportunity to share information and ideas with others. Showing provides competition, which encourages breeders to produce better dogs. Breeders who show are not relying solely on a pedigree to indicate quality. The show ring is the forum that indicates the degree to which a dog conforms to the standard for its breed. Even though you may not want a show dog, you deserve a pet that was the result of a carefully planned litter, a pup that received the same care as a potential champion. The breeder who shows is known by others and has a reputation to uphold and will be as careful and honest in selling you a pet as he or she is in selling show stock.

Your breeder should give you a reasonable time to have your pup checked by a veterinarian to determine its state of health. If a problem should arise, it can be quickly resolved.

Breeders should give you written instructions on feeding, training, care and grooming. The breeder should also supply you with basic information about the breed, either as a gift or give you the opportunity to purchase it at a nominal cost. You should also receive the pup's health and vaccination records.

Breeders should be able to supply proof that their dogs have been examined by a veterinarian and that their stock has been x-rayed clear of hip dysplasia, preferably with an OFA certification number.

Make it clear that you expect the breeder's responsibility to continue after you have taken the puppy home. Many dedicated breeders will ask that the pup be returned to them or placed with new owners that meet their approval if, for some reason, you are not able to continue ownership.

Be prepared to answer a few questions yourself. Reputable breeders are genuinely interested in finding quality homes for their puppies. Don't be offended if the breeder asks whether you have a fenced yard or what kind of dogs you have had in the past and what happened to them. A serious breeder will want to know what kinds of situations their puppies will be subjected to and what kind of care they will receive. Some breeders may seem a bit hesitant to sell you a pup until they know a bit more about you.

Breeders should be willing to have you visit their premises and should be able to show you a clean environment, well-socialized pups and a dam with a good temperament. Puppies should seem happy and self-assured.

Breeders should be willing to give you references names of people who have purchased puppies from them in the past or other Airedale owners or their veterinarian.

Breeders should provide a contract or some written, signed conditions of sale. You should also get a copy of your puppy's pedigree and you should be able to see a copy of the AKC Registration Application Form (blue slip).

Breeders will often require that your pet be spayed or neutered when it reaches the correct age and may withhold registration paper work until proof is provided. The most important reason for this is to insure a healthier animal. Spayed or neutered dogs are far less prone to many serious maladies. In addition, serious breeders spend a lot of time and effort planning breeding programs designed to improve the breed. They selectively carry out their programs with only the best quality available. Pets should be loved and enjoyed as pets. Reputable breeders don't want their dogs used just to make puppies, or worse yet, end up in a "puppy mill" where they will be used to mass produce Airedales.

[Based partly on format and information obtained from the Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier Club of America]