



Breeder and Trainer Jane Ardern Shares What to Look for in a Quality Breeder and What to Avoid



Trainer, behaviorist, and expert breeder Jane Ardern with her dog Pickles at her graduation with a BSc, Honors in canine behavior and training from Hill University at Beverly Minister.

► What do you recommend dog owners look for in a quality breeder?

A quality breeder is someone who has a good reason to breed, wants to improve the breed, and looks at the long-term future of the whole breed, not just the two dogs in front of them. They should provide health testing for both parents and, in the case of working dogs, should have evidence that the dog has achieved something to demonstrate its capability for the work intended. Quality breeders will make time and invest in the rearing of the pups, providing them with as much experience and early neurological stimulation as possible. They'll match the puppies' needs and the owners' needs rather than just letting you pick the pink one because it's your favorite color. No one rehomes because they don't like the color of the dog.

► What are red flags in a breeder?

A few red flags would be not being given access to both parents, not seeing all of the litter, not seeing where the pups are raised and living, and not seeing mum with the puppies. It would also be a red flag for them to not health test or to only health test the father without bothering to test the health of the mother. Others would be not creating contracts or not being prepared to take the pup back if there is a problem.



Responsible breeders will ensure puppies are taught to love being handled by humans and will safely introduce them to many new experiences before they leave for their new homes.

► **How can we best support the mother before and after she gives birth in such a way that we are setting the puppies up to be resilient and not stressed the first few weeks of life?**

Make sure the mother is in excellent health throughout, with low stress but still plenty of enrichment and good-quality rest. Provide regular veterinary checks and support throughout and a safe, quiet place in which to give birth and raise the puppies. Owner support is important if the dog is a people-oriented dog and normally seeks support and social comfort from humans.

► **What do you wish dog owners knew about choosing a new puppy?**

I wish they knew about the differences between responsible breeders and puppy farmers. Puppies have both stable and flexible behaviors, but puppies can't be molded into something they are not through training.

► **What are the most important things breeders can do to properly socialize newborn and young puppies in their care?**

Breeders must teach them to recover from startle responses, desensitization is only part of the life skills required to cope with life. Life is full of surprises, and some will be scary. They should expose puppies to plenty of vehicle travel before they leave and should allow them to interact with socially competent adult dogs. It's important to teach them to love human hands, handling, and restraint and to feel comfortable and safe around humans who have possession of "things of value." Breeders should make sure puppies' first entertainment and reinforcement experiences match their new home, for example, playing with dog toys or chewing dog chews. Creating a set sleep and wake routine is also important.