

QUESTIONS TO ASK A BREEDER

Original article written by the Rottweiler Club of New Mexico and modified with permission by Liz Bauer.

NOTE: If you are dealing with a member of the ARC, RCC, MRC, CRC, USRC, or another Rottweiler club whose members adhere to a strict code of ethics, you should obtain satisfactory answers to these questions. If, however, you decide to take the risk of buying a puppy from the backyard breeders or puppy mills who advertise in the newspaper or in some dog magazines, the answers to these questions should be most revealing and alarming as far as the kind of quality for the same price or less than the puppy mills and backyard breeders. **As the saying goes, *Let the buyer beware.***

1. Are both the sire and dam of the litter O.F.A. certified?

Correct answer: Yes, both sire and dam are OFA certified. I can show you copies of the OFA certificates. (You should also ask for the OFA numbers and you can contact the OFA Registry or check the site at www.offa.org)

Incorrect answer: Oh, no, we don't have an OFA certification, but the hips are "clear". Our vet checked them out. I don't really know if the sire's hips are ok or not. Hang up the phone and end the conversation here. If the hips were not certified by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals, then you don't know if hip dysplasia is present or not. Many "breeders" will tell you the hips are "clear" meaning they had a vet who was probably not a Board Certified radiologist look at the hips and say they looked OK. *Unless the Vet is Board Certified, he doesn't really know what he's looking at.

Insist on seeing an OFA certificate for both parents! Or look it up on the OFA website for yourself. If it is not on the website, they are not certified!

Remember – these diseases are the result of combinations of multiple genes, therefore certification of the parents does not guarantee the puppies will be disease free. Ask for a contract which guarantees against all genetic disorders.

2. Are either the sire or and the dam titled in conformation or working trials such as Schutzhund, AKC obedience, German or AKC style conformation shows?

Correct answer: Yes, the dam has her C.D. (an AKC obedience title) and is in training for her BH (a Schutzhund obedience and temperament title) which we hope to complete next year. She has also been shown in the German breed ring and was rated V-2, I can give you a copy of her critique (German shows provide each dog with a written critique of the dogs conformation). The sire is pointed (in order to become an AKC champion, a dog must accumulate 15 points. When someone says to you that a dog is pointed that means that it has some points towards its championship title, but has not yet accumulated the 15 points necessary to be a champion), and has a Schutzhund three (a German title involving tracking, obedience and protection).

Incorrect answer: Well, no, we've never shown our bitch. We just bought her as a pet. But I know she's a good quality Rottweiler because she has champions in her pedigree, and we paid a lot of money for her. (Translation: We do not know, nor do we care about the future of the Rottweiler breed. We spent a lot of money for this dog, and we want to make money selling her puppies. We do not want to bother with hip x-rays, dog shows, obedience training, or learning about the strengths and weaknesses of our bitch's bloodlines because that takes time and money.....)

3. Why did you decide to breed your female?

Correct answer: We feel that she is a good representative of the Rottweiler breed and has something to offer to perpetuate the desirable qualities of the breed. For example, she has demonstrated her working ability by earning an AKC obedience title. She has a lovely head, which you don't see very often in a bitch. She has a very dark eye, nice small ears, full detention and a scissors bite, an iron topline, and very fluid movement. Both of her parents are titled. She comes from a litter of 6 puppies and of those 6, 4 have already finished conformation and/or obedience titles, and 3 have earned Schutzhund titles. Also, of the 6 puppies, 5 are OFA certified. We searched for a male that complimented her and found one we like in Chicago, so we sent her there to be bred. We didn't want to breed her unless we found the right male for her. The sire of the litter has produced several schutzhund, obedience titled and champion offspring, so we know he has the ability to pass on his good qualities. (In some cases the sire may be unproven, but may have lineage which the bitches owner desires for their bloodlines, in those cases, the bitches owner will usually be keeping at least one puppy for themselves).

Incorrect answer: We spent several hundred dollars for this dog and we wanted to get back some of our investment. Besides, she's a beautiful bitch. She has perfect markings, and she has a great pedigree. There are 20 champions in 5

generations! We also wanted to keep a puppy for ourselves. (What this person is telling you is that he/she is only breeding their dog for the sake of making money. They may not be doing this maliciously... But they by no means have taken the time and effort to prove this bitch's quality, and he probably bred to the closest and cheapest male. He may even own the stud dog as well. When someone says their dog has a "championship bloodline", they usually meant that the great-grandparents have a championship title. Seldom will the parents or the grand-parents be titled. The great-grandparents are too far removed genetically to have a great influence on the quality of these puppies. Once again, hang up!)

4. Have both the sire and dam been tested for genetic defects such as hypothyroidism, cataracts or sub-aortic stenosis? Is there any history of entropion or ectropion in the bloodlines?

Correct answer: Yes, both sire and dam have been tested and are certified free of the above defects. I'll be happy to give you the number of my vet so that you can call him/her and inquire about my dog's health history. I can also give you the name and phone number of the stud dog's owner so that you can get the same information on the sire of the litter. To my knowledge, there is no history of entropion or ectropion in either the dam's or the sire's bloodlines as far back as the grandparents. (NOTE: Hypothyroidism is very prevalent in the Rottweiler. In some cases, an affected dog will be bred, but only to a partner who has a normal thyroid as well as a strong genetic propensity for normal thyroid. A low thyroid animal should only be bred if he/she is an outstanding specimen in every other respect. Although it is not desirable, and we don't want to perpetuate the problem, Hypothyroidism can be inexpensively treated with drugs. On the other hand, a dog with entropion or ectropion, that is eyelids that turn inward causing the dog great pain, or outward, causing pus to constantly collect in the dog's eyes, can be corrected by surgery but at a significant expense...)

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Incorrect answer: Hypothyroidism? What's that? Cataracts? Our dog can see fine, Entropion what? What is that anyway? No, I don't think our dogs have any of those things...(This "breeder" is obviously not interested in preserving the breed and may be passing on hereditary defects that may cost you hundred of dollars to remedy. He is most likely only interested in your money...definitely hang up on this one.)

5. Do both the sire and the dam have correct dentition (all of their teeth AND a scissors bite)?

Correct answer: Well, of course they do. I wouldn't breed a dog with a disqualifying fault such as missing teeth, or an undershot, overshot, or wry bite. Breeding a dog with faulty dentition will eventually ruin the head type because, you see, the teeth are actually a part of the skeletal structure. Changing the skeletal structure changes the head type. In order to preserve the correct head type, only dogs with correct dentition should be bred.

Incorrect answer: Well of all the things.....We've never counted her teeth! What's that got to do with anything?! She can sure as heck still bite somebody pretty good!

6. What are the strengths and weaknesses in the sire and dam? How do you feel the two bloodlines compliment each other?

Correct answer: The strengths of the dam are as follows: nice head; a dark, almond shaped eye; a good front; a nice topline and a short back. She has nice tight feet and pasterns. Her weaknesses are that, although she has a nice head, she is wet (loose skin in the throat area), her markings are a little light in color, but they are well defined. She could have more bone. She has fair movement. It isn't awful, but it could be better. She doesn't have much drive when she gaits. As far as her bloodline's weaknesses, she is an OFA fair, and 5 of the 6 puppies in her litter passed the OFA, BUT, her maternal grandmother produced 50% dysplastic puppies (half of the puppies that her grandmother had, with 3 different sires, did not pass the OFA). So, we looked for a male who had a bloodline with a history of producing normal hips. The sire we selected for her is strong in all of the areas that she is weak. He has excellent movement with good reach and drive. He has dark mahogany markings. He has a beautiful head with no wetness present. He has good bone. He comes from a dam who produced 3 litters, and 85% passed the OFA. So, I feel that he possesses a strong genetic propensity to pass on normal hips. As for his weak points, he does have a round eye and his feet are not very tight. but our bitch is strong in those areas, so we haven't doubled up on any weaknesses.

Incorrect answer: Well, the dam has perfect markings. She's a little small, weighing only 80 pounds, so we picked the biggest male we could find. The sire weighs 150 pounds! He has a huge head, too! He's awesome! (Translation: I don't know a thing about responsible breeding of dogs, much less about Rottweilers and my own particular bloodlines....and I'm hoping that you don't either so that you'll buy one of these puppies.)

7. What sort of guarantee do you offer on the puppy?

For a pet puppy, we guarantee the following:

- (1) We guarantee that the puppy will not develop crippling hip dysplasia.
- (2) We guarantee that the puppy will not develop any crippling genetic defects. If the animal has been diagnosed with crippling hip dysplasia or "Grade 3" elbows (both of them), we will refund half the purchase price.
- (3) We guarantee that the puppy went home to you with a stable temperament and will not be excessively shy or aggressive (NOTE: Even some code of ethics breeders will not offer this in their contracts because temperament is influenced by environment which is the fault of the owner, not the breeder. When a dog has an unstable temperament, it is difficult to prove the cause.)

For a show potential puppy, we guarantee all of the above in addition to the following:

- (1) that the hips will pass the OFA certification. We require they are done by the age of 28 months.
- (2) that the puppy will not develop any disqualifying faults according to the AKC standard for the breed which would render it incapable of being shown. If the puppy is dysplastic, or if the puppy develops a disqualifying fault, we will refund \$800 upon written proof that the animal has been rendered incapable of reproducing or the Buyer may purchase another show potential puppy from a future litter for \$1000 once we have received proof that the animal has been rendered incapable of reproducing.

Incorrect answer: Guarantee? No, we don't offer any guarantee. You pay your money and you take your chances. Or.....Guarantee? Yes, we'll guarantee that the puppy will not be dyplastic. (this is too vague...Unless the guarantee specifically states that the dog's hips will pass the OFA after the dog reaches 2 years of age, it is worthless. Also, the contract should state what the breeder will offer you if the dog is dysplastic, deaf, blind, or has an unstable temperament and has to be destroyed.)

***The point we are trying to make here is that for the same price as you'd pay a puppy mill or backyard breeder, you can get a far better dog by dealing with a knowledgeable, conscientious, and ethical breeder. The ethical breeders will not advertise puppies in the newspaper. His/her puppies are not difficult to sell and so he/she usually doesn't need to place an ad.**

Remember, Buyer Beware! Investigate carefully before you buy!