

Questions to Ask Tibetan Mastiff Breeders

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*"A sudden bold and unexpected question
doth many times surprise a man and lay him open."
Francis Bacon*

It is unfortunate that as a breed becomes more familiar to the public, some look to exploit the breed's new popularity. Uninformed novices, backyard breeders and puppy millers seek to make a buck by producing puppies. Many don't know what they are doing and don't care. The dogs are thrown together, puppies become a commodity and, in some cases, a way to make a living. Because production equals income, breeders offering puppies can afford to sell "cheap" because they have a seemingly unlimited number of puppies to sell. We can only hope that education and common sense keep prospective owners away from these sorts. It is obvious that rewarding bad breeders with puppy sales ultimately damages the entire Tibetan Mastiff breed.

Disreputable or backyard breeders and puppy millers don't usually take the time to impact the breed with good works. They extend all their efforts to simply selling their multitudes of puppies via on-line puppy-selling sites or their own website. Often there will be little involvement with initial screening or extended interaction with prospective owners concerning the day-to-day care and management of their dog. While not all breeders join in the show ring scene, they generally find ways to participate by volunteering, mentoring, rescuing or promoting the breed in a positive matter. By and large, reputable breeders tend to feel comfortable supplying owner references or referrals to other highly regarded breeders.

Dedicated and truly knowledgeable breeders are simply hobbyists who dedicate vast amounts of time and resources to the huge responsibility that is breeding. It is an involved, time-consuming and expensive venture. Such breeders feel accountability for their puppies and feel prospective owners need to understand that welcoming a Tibetan Mastiff into your home is a 10-14 year commitment. It is in everyone's best interest that you take your time, ask smart questions and select your breeder of choice wisely. Please remember that while it may be in *your* best interest to purchase your puppy from an ethical breeder, it is also your *obligation* to do so.

Questions For the Breeder

- How long have you been breeding Tibetan Mastiffs? Have you bred other breeds in the past? Are you involved with other breeds now?
- If you are a novice breeder, are you mentored by a more experienced breeder? Can I contact this breeder?
- How many litters of Tibetan Mastiffs do you produce each year? How many litters of all breeds do you breed each year? (Other than monetary profit, there is rarely a reason for more than two litters per year per breed.)
- While I may be looking for a companion/family dog and not a show/breeding animal, I still want a dog of quality. Can you tell me about your dog breeding practices, motivation, ethics, and philosophies? Do you adhere to a Breed Standard? Are you involved with showing your dogs? Are you involved with a breed club or some organization dedicated to protecting and preserving the Tibetan Mastiff?

Questions Concerning the Breed

- What are the specific challenges of bringing a Tibetan Mastiff into my home? Would you speak to me about the character and daily management of a Tibetan Mastiff? I am interested in learning about such things as containment, crate- training, feeding, behavior, grooming and exercise requirements.
- What are the common genetic diseases in this breed? What are the common health issues you have seen in the puppies in your lines?
- Do you have a planned breeding program in place? Can you speak to me a little about the health of the pedigrees you have chosen to breed on and your long-term breeding goals?
- Why did you choose these 2 particular dogs to breed this year? How old are the parents of the puppies? Tell me about the health and character of the parents. What medical checks do you put your adult dogs through prior to breeding? Would you provide me with evidence of health (ie. hips/elbows) clearances from a recognized registry? (Hip & elbow clearances from a breeders personal vet are not considered sufficient.)
- While I understand that a registered dog is not a guarantee of quality, are your dogs registered with a recognized registry such as the AKC? Does the puppy come with registration papers? (The AKC does not guarantee the quality of any dog, only that the parents are purebred registered dogs.)
- Are you raising the litter on your premises? May I arrange to visit your kennel/home to meet the dogs and the puppies when the puppies are old enough? What strategies do you use to socialize your puppies?
- At what age are puppies allowed to leave your home? (Many states have a law prohibiting the transfer of puppies before the age of 8 weeks of age.)
- Can you tell me about the medical care you provide for the puppies? Can you speak to me about your vaccination and feeding protocols? Do you provide a puppy packet outlining such things as pedigree, veterinarian medical pamphlet, microchip/tattoo identification and management information.

Questions About the Purchase Process

- What is the process if I want to reserve a puppy from your next litter?
- Do you have a purchase contract that I can review prior to a deposit or full payment?
- Can you provide references to other owners who will speak to me about their experiences with the breed?
- Do you provide "after sale" support if I should have questions about the breed and my puppy in particular? What is your policy should I not be able to keep a puppy/dog from your kennel? Should you get out of the breed, what efforts will you make to ensure that I still receive advice and lifetime support?
- If you do not have any puppies suited to me, would you provide me with a short list of responsible breeders that I may contact?