

Where have all the pure-breeds gone?

This seems like a rather strange question to ask as I sit writing this and beside me, curled up on the sofa and at my feet are 6 purebred dogs of various sizes.

I am not going to deny that I am a pure breed fancier, exhibitor and occasional hobby breeder or as I like to refer to myself a breed 'preservationist'. As of late however, I have not participated in two of those venues. Dog shows have not been a large part of my life in the last year or so quite simply because I have lost the luster to show. All of my show dogs have

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either finished their show careers or have simply carried on my lack of enthusiasm for showing. Not that I do not enjoy showing, I do, it is my greatest passion and my meaning in life but the sad fact is nobody appreciates a well bred dog anymore. It used to be such an important part of breeding. To show your well bred animals to judges that in turn compared them to the ideal standard of the breed. Breed

standards that take years to be written and perfected. It takes a lot of hardcore consideration on the part of the breed secretaries and other breed preservationists. SO many people have so little knowledge of what goes into developing a breed standard that the explanation here will simply be lost.

I will say however that contrary to popular belief by the lay people it is not simply based on looks and beauty. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and to those with the untrained eye beauty may be the first thing you see. Let me tell you though that beauty comes from form and function. A dog that is built to do a job is beautiful not because it has long eyelashes and a particular color but because it has correct structure and movement that enables it to do the job it was bred to do.

Now before I carry on and take flack for calling them it's instead of he or she. I will explain that even though I am a breeder, I am not so cold as to not recognize that they are indeed male and female and I certainly do refer to my dogs and he and she. However, for the sake of the article, I am simply referring to them as 'it' for sake of being non-sexist. I hope you all can accept that.

Now so far as to refer to us show people and breeders as callous and

greedy I must wholeheartedly defend that description for those of you who know us know very little. Responsible breeders hardly ever actually make any money. We, breed preservationist, are at best dog poor and some of us are dog tired of defending our desperate plea to have our beloved breed be in our grand-children's futures.

When I grew up I read every book there was on dogs. There was Lad of Sunnybrook, a series about a fantastic Rough Collie, Big Red - a gorgeous Irish Setter, Rin Tin Tin - a German Shepherd, The Littlest Hobo - another GSD, The Shaggy Dog - An old English Sheepdog and later a Bearded Collie. Of course nobody will ever forget Lassie.

You didn't see many cockapoos, labradoodles, shipoos, chi weenies or puggles back then! What on earth has the world come to when it is considered a crime to buy a purebred dog from a responsible breeder? A person that has years and years of pedigree information, genetic testing, DNA samples, conformation and obedience titles and heaven knows what else under their belt. Yet it is perfectly acceptable to pay some inexperienced nobody that decided to make a little money off breeding mutts and labeling them designer dogs. An interesting and fitting description.

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These are the sad victims of the greed and selfishness of human beings and to have their fads satisfied even at the expense of animal! The purebred dogs are those that have been in existence and perfected for hundreds of years through the blood, sweat and tears of dedicated, committed and knowledgeable people.

I had an excellent story told to me once by a long time respectable breeder. She was walking on a beach one day when an individual with the same breed of dog as herself approached her. He inquired

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about using her very accomplished male dog as stud for his female in waiting. The lady asked him if he had performed any health testing on the female and as to whether or not she was registered with a purebreed registry. He replied "oh I am not a professional, I am not doing it for the money, I simply want to have a litter to sell." In turn the lady breeder replied back with the simple comment. "In fact sir you are the professional breeder as I never make money breeding my dogs, I am lucky at best if I ever

break even, I do it for the love of the breed."

So while this inexperienced individual would sell his puppies for the same amount as "the going rate" A.) he would not have spent the thousands it takes to finish his dog in a dog show, which helps keep the standard in place and how we make sure that a Poodle looks like a Poodle and a Setter looks like a Setter. B.) He has not spent the average thousand or more on health testing his potential breeding bitch (yes folks female dogs are called bitches and I don't care how many of you have bastardized the name by referring to your ex wife or mother-in-law as one. Also parents it really is not a bad word when used in the proper context.) If you haven't seen the point so far keep reading.

So many people are under the illusion that they do not need registration papers for their "pet" or they don't want to spend what a well-bred dog costs. That the costs incurred by a breeder when importing new lines or better dogs into their breeding program are of no concerns of theirs. What many people fail to realize is that eventually these dogs will be the very foundation of what the future holds for these breeds. Great breeders do not contribute to the warping and mutations that appear in certain breeds. The public does so by buying from irresponsible greedy dog brokers, the ones that

get named 'breeders', in which we get painted with the same brush. It is then responsible breeders who have to clean up the mess. These backyard breeders are the very people that move away from the breed standard and breed less quality animals both in structure and in health. Chihuahuas start to look like Rat Terriers, Great Danes start to look like Mastiffs, Border Collies like Aussies and so on. Most backyard breeders start their breeding "programs" on the dogs that are meant to be scratched from the breed ring. Not up to the standards for that breeding. Dogs that were sold on non-breeding contracts with their registrations withheld until proof of spay or neuter. For those of you that have 'purchased' a dog without papers - this is what you have contributed to.

As mentioned earlier form MUST reflect function. Each and every dog is unique in its physical appearance. Each breed was developed to do a certain job, from Terriers to Mastiffs, these breeds look the way they do based on the job they were bred to do. German Shepherds had to have long strides to cover much ground comfortably while droving their sheep, Terriers have to be tenacious and able to go to ground to get in and out of tight spots while chasing vermin, Rough Collies needed thick coats to keep warm in harsh weather.

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Not only do you take in physical attributes but you also have to consider temperaments. This includes tenacity, affection, loyalty or aloofness.

Imagine how much emptier all the shelters could be purchasers of dogs would simply promote a responsible breeder.

How you say?

Responsible breeders insist on responsible homes.

Spaying and Neutering pets to not allow for unwanted/unplanned puppies

Intensive interviews of potential pet homes to weed out and to help people make the right decision for them.

Continuous support throughout the life of the puppy so people never feel frustrated and alone to leave them to do something desperate and potentially inappropriate for the animal.

Being involved in groups, organizations, clubs that promote and take on issues which face their particular breed.

Continuous education and learning.

Eliminating, to the best of their ability, many health issues.

A responsible breeder would never breed a litter if they didn't have room to keep the entire litter if suitable homes couldn't be found.

Breed preservationist would never

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sell to a puppy broker or pet store.

Responsible breeders only breed to better the breed and to offer something for the future.

A responsible breeder always strives to remain within the breed standard and would never purposely breed away from the breed's original purpose.

The number one reason that shelters could be empty is that a responsible breeder would never allow a puppy of theirs to ever be surrendered to an animal shelter. The door of a responsible breeder is always open for one of their dogs to be returned.

Did you know that pets adopted

from animal shelters almost NEVER stay in their adoptive homes. 70% of adopted animals are returned within the first month!!!

Why? Simply because people are impulsive. Humane societies are just as irresponsible as pet stores because the play on the emotions of people. There are never enough questions asked and no one will tell people to go away and sleep on it. Come back in the morning, if you still feel this is the right pet for you then we will be happy to help.

Never adopt or purchase an animal as a gift. Living things should never be considered for this purpose. Buy an inanimate object and make getting an animal a learning and educated decision made by everyone in the family not just a single individual, it makes for a much more harmonious experience.

Enjoy your Dogs!

Erika Phillips

A student of Animal Behavior/Nutrition and Alternative Medicine since 1990. She has studied at Guelph University in Canada, Glasgow University in Scotland and attended the British Institute of Homeopathy. Erika has bred, raised and competed with many breeds of dogs in all aspects of dog sport. She currently consults on Animal Nutrition, Animal Behaviour and Alternative Health, including herbs and homeopathy and owns The Controversial Canine. She currently resides in Ontario, Canada.

