

Breeder Responsibility....where does it begin or end?

Well the litter is ready to go: wormed, vaccinated, socialized, and hopefully all sold! Sold with a written contract that will hopefully help ensure the puppy is well cared for, kept in a fenced yard, and returned back to *you* the breeder if the owner can no longer keep their pup. Ethically I personally feel that if you made them, ultimately you are responsible for that baby-forever. Here are some thoughts both as a breeder and from National Rescue.

I had a discussion the other day about a rescue we were placing and the question came up:

Did I know who the breeder was when we placed the dog. I said, "No of course not"...., if we had known, GWPCA Rescue policy is to always contact the breeder.

However, all rescues had a breeder!

This may seem like an obvious statement, but take a minute, when did you last check up on your "kids"? I asked around a bit, and some breeders checked on their litters annually, others up to age two after hips/health checks, another guaranteed their health for 48 hrs and that was it....and several sold their pups basically "as is". No they weren't all GWPCA members. Did the owners survive their GWP's teenage years? If they were supposed to get their pup spayed/neutered did you check to see if they really did get fixed? Were they ever registered? Those in-between pups quality wise hopefully went on a non-breeding registration...have you taken a peek at them to see if they improved sufficiently enough to be used in the gene pool? Do you know if your babies are still in the same state you sold them to? And worst case scenario if they don't have the dog what did they do with it?

(On a quick note, the AKC now allows the breeder to register their entire litter individually online as soon as they have a litter number).

I tend to send xmas cards out the first several years-a: because I like hearing from our puppy buyers and, B: its an easy way let the puppy buyers know we're thinking of them.

From a rescue standpoint, while you might think a dog that looks familiar, there are lots of liver ticked dogs out there, and we've had five white ones with liver heads and no body markings in the past six months. Can you identify a dog if need be? Have you taken photos of them that would identify them sufficiently in case you didn't see the dog for a year or so? (no the cute photo of them standing in their food pan with mush all over them probably won't work). Microchip numbers written down?

Then there's the day you the breeder get that call, the dog isn't working out for whatever reason...it *will* happen eventually if you breed long enough.

Can you take him back? Often times we've found doing the rescue that the owners haven't even thought of contacting the breeder. Amazing to me, but none the less it does happen.

Other explanations for not contacting the breeder: Some don't know the breeder-they got the dog 3rd hand from their cousin Bob's friend, others don't want to say where they got the dog because they bought the dog impulsively, and feel guilty about not keeping the dog. The honest ones sometimes say they weren't able to cope with the dog, and simply want out of the entire situation. And then the sad cases, the owner has been refused by the breeder and the owner can't keep the dog any longer. No the breeder isn't a jerk (always), sometimes the breeder is no longer alive, they've moved into condos or simply are no longer breeding dogs. And then there are the borderline backyard "breeder" and puppy mills that for example seem to turn up a lot of dogs in Kansas. Every year half a litter of purebred gwp babies with long tails gets turned into the same local shelter....they're what gives bad names to the word "Breeder".

But should you as the breeder be expected to take back the 9, 10 year old that no longer can keep up in the field so well, and the guy wants a new dog but his wife told Hubbie only one dog? Yes it does happen. I have one rescue like that sitting in our kennels right now....

The breeder has died, the owners let the dog get out at age 10, she somehow managed to kill the neighbors cat, but they no longer want to keep her even though they've lived with her all these years. The owners are retiring and moving into a condo.

What about the gunshy ones? Personally I think the stupidity in making a dog gunshy should require the owner to have to keep that dog until it dies of old age, but reality is that they want to place it in rescue asap so they can have a dog for next season. They're actually the "better" idiots, as vs the ones that simply turn it loose to run until it gets hit by a vehicle, shot by a farmer, or caught and turned into a shelter. Keeping in mind its already noise shy, and will take a lot of work to find out if its mentally stable enough to be rehomed.

What about when you take it back....did it really do the bad things the owners said it does. Can you believe them, are they exaggerating or are they not even touching the edge of the wicked stuff the dog can come up with and it's a cross between Cujo and Home Alone. Good luck, and hopefully he's crate trained. That is the first step that we take with all rescues is to get them crate trained.....then on to socialization and civilizing....<grin> Then the cases where there were health issues. Can you replace the dog? Should you replace the dog-was it a health or environmental problem.

There are many joys to raising a litter but the flip side has just as much long term obligations one needs to realize and be willing to commit to to ensure the pup is safe, healthy and enjoying life with its family.

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2009 GWPCA Natl Rescue