

Questions to Ask the Breeder- This list should NOT be emailed but discussed with the breeder as you get to know them. Take time to build relationships with as many breeders as you can. Please see the explanations on the last page.

Breeder's Name: _____ Address: _____
Kennel Name: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Cell: _____ Email: _____

About the breeder:

1. How long have you been breeding Newfs? _____
2. What other breeds of dogs do you breed? _____
3. What dog clubs do you belong to? a. NCA _____ b. Regional Club _____ c. All-breed _____
4. What types of activities do you do with your dogs? If few or none, why? _____
a. Conformation _____ d. Water Work _____
b. Obedience _____ e. Therapy _____
c. Draft Work _____ f. Other _____
5. Are you involved in Rescue? _____ If not, why? _____

About their breeding practices:

6. Why do you breed? _____
7. Do you plan your breedings? _____ How often? _____
8. Is any testing is done on sire and dam just prior to breeding? _____
9. Which tests are done?
a. Brucellosis _____ b. Other _____

About the sire and dam (if puppies are available):

10. In what ways does each parent meet the standard for the breed? _____
11. How does each parent compliment the other? _____
12. What health/temperament problems have you seen in their lines? _____
13. What health clearances do the parents have? (acceptable certifying parties in parentheses)
a. Heart (Board Cert. Cardiologist) _____ d. CERF _____ g. Other _____
b. Hips (OFA/PennHip/OVC) _____ e. Thyroid _____
c. Elbows (OFA/PennHip/OVC) _____ f. Cystinuria _____
14. Will you provide proof of health clearances? _____ If not, why? _____
15. Are these posted on a public database? _____ Which one(s)? _____
16. Are your dogs registered with the AKC? _____ If not, what other registry? _____
17. Will you provide proof of registration? _____ May I see a copy of their pedigrees? _____
18. Does either parent have any working or conformation titles? _____
19. How old was the dam when she was first bred? _____ How old is she now? _____
20. May I see the sire and dam before I decide to purchase a puppy? Sire _____ Dam _____

About the puppies:

21. How old will the puppies be when they are ready to go to a new home? _____
22. Will they be cleared for heart defects by a board certified cardiologist at 10 weeks of age? _____
23. Do all the puppies come with registration papers? _____ If not why? _____
24. Will I get the registration papers when I pick up my puppy? _____
25. Are puppies sold on a limited registration? _____ If not, why? _____
26. Is the price for pet and show quality pups the same? _____ If not, why? _____
27. Is there a contract and health guarantee? _____ If not, why? _____
28. Will you provide a review copy of the contract/health guarantee in advance of purchase? _____
29. What happens if for any reason, I cannot keep my dog? _____
30. Do you provide written instructions for care and feeding of new puppies? _____

31. Who will pick out the best puppy for me, you or me? _____
32. Are your puppies socialized before they go to a new home? _____ How? _____

Other things to discuss:

33. Are you able to offer referrals to vets, training classes, or other Newf owners/breeders/clubs in my area? _____ Which can you help me with? _____
34. Will you regularly stay in touch and offer support or mentoring for activities or if problems arise? _____ May I contact you at any time if a problem occurs? _____
35. Will you help educate me in physical and mental puppy growth and provide suggestions for handling typical normal puppy behavior? _____
36. Do you require a home check prior to selling a puppy? _____
37. If you turn me down, are you willing to explain why and what I might do to improve my chances, knowledge, etc? _____
38. Are you willing to add my name to a waiting list and discuss your future breeding plans if I'm not ready to purchase a puppy now? _____
39. Will you provide me with references? _____
- a. Veterinarian _____
 - b. Others that have your pups _____
 - c. Other breeders _____
 - d. Others _____
40. What questions do you have of me? _____

Notes:

Instructions: Use this sheet to help evaluate the answers you've been given.

The questions which may be answered "Y/N" are phrased in a manner in which a "yes" answer is preferable. More "yes" answers increases the likelihood that the breeder is knowledgeable, experienced and cares more about the dog than the dollar. However, in some cases, a "no" answer is explainable. (e.g. see question # 4. A handicapped breeder might not be able to participate in physical activities with their dog; but, they may have handlers or co-owners who train and show the dogs for them). Always ask "why?", if the answer is no.

Open-ended questions, which cannot be answered "Y/N", can be weighed but are not necessarily right or wrong. They just give you a better understanding of the breeder's caring, involvement, experience and knowledge of the breed.

To explain certain questions in more detail, see question...

- # 1. Preferably, new breeders will have a mentor who is guiding their decision making and skill-building. If they seem to be new to the breed, ask who supports them in their endeavors. Of course, the number of years (few or many) breeding doesn't mean the breeder is responsible.
- # 2. One or two breeds are acceptable. Any more than that begins to indicate a probable puppy mill.
- # 3. Active membership in a dog club indicates an interest in the breed and/or dog activities.
- # 5. Involvement in Rescue indicates the breeder feels responsible for the breed as a whole, not just what s/he produces.
- # 6. Responsible breeders breed dogs to improve the breed, not to make money.
- # 7. To produce good specimens, responsible breeders will carefully plan their litters and will not breed a bitch just because she is in season.
- #'s 10 & 11. The breeder should understand the standard for the breed and strive to breed dogs which meet or come close to that ideal. They should be able (and willing) to point out the strengths and weaknesses of each parent dog and how each can help the other produce better puppies.
- # 12. There are NO lines of dogs without problems. Breeders who claim no problems should be avoided.
- # 13. A responsible breeder breeds parents that have undergone veterinary testing for specific genetic health problems common to that breed. Familiarize yourself with the organizations listed as certifying parties to find out more about their certification process. Most have websites you can research. Health clearances issued by a regular vet are NOT acceptable. Tests on the dog must be done at certain ages to be valid. Don't you agree that people buying a pet have just as much right to a sound healthy puppy as those buying a show pup?
- # 16. At this time, the AKC and UKC are the only acceptable registries for purebred dogs in the US. AKC is preferable in the US. Each country has its own registries. Registries other than AKC or UKC, in the US, are typically used only by puppy mills. Don't be fooled by similar sounding names or acronyms.
- # 18. Titles on the parent dogs are good but the term "titles" in general can be misleading. Puppy mills and BYB's will often advertise "championship bloodlines". This is a meaningless term as poor quality parent dogs can have champions for grandparents; and some fine parent dogs are not champions. This question simply indicates that the breeder or owner of the parents is involved in the breed. Other working dog titles on the parents indicate the same commitment to the breed.
- # 19. Constantly being pregnant is hard on any female. Dogs might be said to have an optimum breeding life. In general, a dog should not be bred until it has passed all of its health clearances. Several clearances cannot be certified until the dog is two years old. Therefore, bitches under two should not be bred. Depending on the breed, the oldest age a dog should be bred is the age before it becomes a senior. For Newfoundlands, this might be around 7 or 8 years old. Of course there are exceptions. **Also See # 13.**

#20. You should certainly ask to visit the breeders kennel and then follow up. It's not always possible to see the sire as he may be housed at another kennel. Part of your responsibility is to check the premises for cleanliness, etc. and meet, at least, the dam to see if she measures up to your idea of the breed both physically and temperamentally.

#'s 21 & 22. Never pick up a puppy before 8 – 10 weeks. Puppies are not developed emotionally or physically enough to leave their dams and siblings before that age. 10 – 12 weeks is even better. Heart clearances are not recommended before 10 weeks and responsible breeders will likely have their pups cleared before sending them on their way.

23 & 24. Anyone offering a puppy at one price “with papers” and a lower price “without papers” is breaking AKC rules. Money can never be connected to the registration papers. Instead, the breeder should use limited registration. Registration papers should always be available when you pick up your puppy. Offers to mail them to you later are not acceptable.

25. Breeders who never take advantage of limited registration simply don't care about the future of the breed. Limited registration is offered by the AKC in an effort to prevent pet quality pups from being bred irresponsibly and passing on potential problems. Please go to the AKC website (www.akc.org) to learn more about limited registration.

26. It costs just as much to produce a pet quality puppy as a show quality one. Most breeders will charge the same price for either. Remember, no one can predict whether or not a puppy will actually grow up to be a show dog so they should be priced the same as pet quality pups.

27, 28 & 29. No contract/health guarantee...no sale. Review a copy before committing to buy. Ask questions about the health coverage and what will happen if the puppy is not healthy according to the terms. Will you have to give the pup back, or receive a refund or reimbursement for medical costs, or be given another puppy from an upcoming litter? Understand the terms and don't buy the pup or sign if you can't agree to abide by them.

31. Breeders often prefer to pick out your puppy for you. Don't be discouraged by this. The breeder has had time to assess each pup and may make a better decision according to your personality and lifestyle.

32. Breeders should take time to work with the individual pups and socialize them in different environments. Puppies that spend all their time in a kennel without experiencing being in a home, meeting new people or going places will often have difficulty in their new homes. Breeders should also have a start on housebreaking for you. This is another important reason to wait until a pup is 10 weeks or better before you take him home. **See #'s 21 & 22.**

#'s 34, 35 & 36. A caring breeder feels responsible for the puppies s/he produces for the rest of their lives. S/he most likely will want to develop a close relationship with you and your family, whether or not it is a long distance one. The breeder may also want a home check done to be able to envision the pup's new environment and make suggestions for its care. Although this may seem invasive, remember that you also can and should check out the breeder's kennel.

37. A breeder should be willing to explain the reasoning behind turning you down. In many cases, it's something that can be remedied. For example; s/he may require a fence in your yard but be willing to work on a solution if you don't have one.

38. A breeder who quickly loses interest when you're simply researching to buy in the future is very likely just in the business of selling dogs. A breeder who is interested in educating you and building a future relationship is more likely interested in the dogs themselves and their potential owners.

39. Get references from the breeder and check them. If they say they do health clearances, check them. If they say the parents are Champions, check it out. If they say they belong to a club, find out if they do. There are many, many resources available to you on the Internet and elsewhere.

40. Be prepared for all manner of questions from the breeder. Good breeders ask probing questions of prospective buyers to ascertain their ability to properly care for a puppy. Breeders who don't ask lots of questions about your knowledge, home environment, dog activity interests, etc. are the breeders to avoid. Please be pleasant even if you feel you're under fire. You are more likely to develop a mutual trust and a better relationship if you respect the breeder's right to ask questions and

make requirements of potential puppy buyers. If you feel you're being treated wrongly or harshly, ask why. If you can't resolve the conflict then simply find a different breeder with whom you can build a relationship.

If you feel this list has been helpful in finding a wonderful breeder, we would love to hear from you. Email us at askhanc@hanc.net with your story. We also welcome any other input you might have.

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