



Helping Canadians Help Animals

**Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS)**

Fédération des sociétés canadiennes d'assistance aux animaux (FSCAA)

## Choosing a reputable and responsible breeder



### Definition of a responsible breeder:

Responsible breeders are individuals who have focused their efforts on one or a select few breeds and, through breeding, historical research and ongoing study, mentoring relationships, club memberships, showing, raising and training of these breeds, have become knowledgeable about their health, heritable defects, temperament and behaviour. Responsible breeders are well suited to educate and screen potential buyers/adopters and provide follow-up support after purchase or adoption. Responsible breeders take lifetime responsibility for the animals they have bred.

The Internet can be a good source of information for prospective pet owners to research breeds, breeders, and pet ownership tips. As well, newspapers usually carry classified sections advertising animals for sale. However, both are also a perfect forum for unscrupulous breeders or brokers to operate virtually anonymously with little fear of exposure. The responsible purchase or adoption of an animal should involve a great deal of personal interaction between the seller or shelter, and the animal's potential owner. It is important for the potential owner to see the facilities where the animals are housed and to meet the animals. Without this interaction, it is difficult to determine if the breeder is a legitimate or reputable source. Please check out our "Responsible Breeder Checklist" to get a better idea of what you should look for in a reputable breeder.

If you are interested in a specific breed of dog or cat, do some research to see if there are any clubs in your area that are dedicated to that breed so that you can talk with people who are owners already. They will also be able to refer you to reputable and responsible breeders who are genuinely interested in dogs or cats rather than making a profit. The breed clubs might also have rescue dogs of that breed available. Many good breeders have excellent websites with information about the breed and their dogs. But, beware because many puppy mills and disreputable breeders also have websites showing their animals in home settings when that may not be the case. This is why it is so important to visit the breeder **before** you agree to buy.

When following up on any advertisement for animals for sale, there are a number of things that you should look for. Below you will find a checklist on how to recognize a responsible/reputable breeder. Here you will also find information on bad breeders. To download our Choose a Pet Responsibly brochure [click here](http://cfhs.ca/info/brochures). [http://cfhs.ca/info/brochures]

### How to recognize a responsible breeder:

- Has no more than 2 or 3 breeds of dogs or cats.
- Has a clean and spacious facility with the opportunity for the animals to receive regular exercise outside of their kennels/cages.
- Gladly shows you their entire facility where dogs or cats are kept and introduces you to all their animals — both adults *and* puppies or kittens, including the mother of the puppies or kittens you are considering.
- Their breeding dogs or cats and offspring are healthy, well socialized and appear to be receiving good care.
- Does not breed females that are too young or too old. Generally dogs and cats should not be bred at less than 18 months. The maximum breeding age for female dogs ranges from 5 years in giant breed dogs to 10 years in toy breeds.
- Puppies or kittens are raised indoors (not in barns or outbuildings), where they are exposed to various household noises, are handled by many different people and are kept clean, warm and well fed.
- Won't let puppies go to new homes before 8 weeks of age and not less than 10 weeks for kittens.
- Openly discusses positive and negative aspects of the animal/breed.

- Asks you many questions about your lifestyle and experience with animals to ensure you are a good match for one of their puppies or kittens.
- Is a member of their breed club; many breed clubs require members to comply with a code of ethics.
- Is knowledgeable about heritable disorders in the breed and will discuss how they breed to avoid such disorders.
- Provides, at no extra charge, valid paperwork for registration and vaccine certificates for the puppy or kitten you are purchasing.
- Never sells puppies or kittens to a companion animal dealer or pet store.
- Has a contract for you to sign that lists your responsibilities to the animal you are purchasing as well as their responsibilities, and outlines their health guarantee for the animal. The guarantee should offer more than simply a replacement animal.

If the breeder that you would like to purchase from lives in another city, you should ask them lots of questions over the phone and ask a friend or a reputable person near the breeder to visit the facility for you.

If the breeder requests to meet you in a shopping mall, parking lot or somewhere else away from their breeding facility to get your new pet, DO NOT purchase from this person. This is a clear indication you are dealing with a disreputable source.

[<http://cfhs.ca/info/brochures>]

Here are some common characteristics of a bad breeder:

- Agrees to sell you a puppy or a kitten without meeting you (e.g. over the phone)
- Doesn't allow you to come and meet them and/or their animals before purchase
- Sells their animals to pet stores or brokers
- Does not ask you questions about your lifestyle and experience with animals
- Has run-down or crowded facilities
- Is reluctant to show you their facilities
- Has dirty, unhealthy, and/or unsocialized animals
- Does not provide daily exercise out of their cages for all their animals (particularly for dogs)
- Sells animals without vaccinations, veterinary check or guarantees against health problems including genetic defects
- Charges extra for kennel club registration and/or pedigree
- Will not take the animal back should a problem arise or will try to simply offer you another animal should the first one get sick, rather than helping with your vet bills

Should you answer a classified ad and you feel that, based on these guidelines, you are concerned about the welfare of the animals, you should immediately contact your local humane society or SPCA.

#### **Ear cropping and tail docking**

Tail docking and ear cropping are done for purely cosmetic reasons. Ear cropping involves cutting off up to two thirds' of the earflap and is usually done when the dog is 9-12 weeks old. Tail docking involves cutting off the tail at the desired length when the puppy is only a few days old. The process severs muscles, tendons, nerves, bone, and cartilage.

If you are considering a breed that traditionally has had either their ears cropped or tails docked such as Boxers, Doberman Pinschers, Miniature Pinschers, Boston Terriers, Great Danes, Schnauzers, Rottweilers, etc. you should try to find a breeder that does not subscribe to these practices. If you cannot, you should contact your breeder to let them know that you do not want your puppy to be altered. If you are met with resistance, you should look for another breeder.

For more information check out our [Issues](http://cfhs.ca/athome/companion_animal_issues/) [http://cfhs.ca/athome/companion\_animal\_issues/] section on ear cropping and tail docking.

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**URL »** <http://cfhs.ca/athome/1133>

*Canadian Federation of Humane Societies*

102-30 Concourse Gate Ottawa, Ontario(ON), Canada K2E 7V7 (613) 224-8072 1-888-678-CFHS (613) 723-0252 [info@cfhs.ca](mailto:info@cfhs.ca)

[www.cfhs.ca](http://www.cfhs.ca) [http://www.cfhs.ca/]