

San Diego Goldendoodles & Bernedoodles Guide to Interviewing a Breeder Before You Buy a Puppy

When considering the purchase of a puppy, there are several things that you'll want to consider. Each home and family will have their own needs and priorities. Are you looking for a family dog, or a hunting companion? Therapy or protector? Big or small? Loud or silent? By this time, we assume that you've researched the breed(s) that you want, so this guide is designed to help you find the best puppy for you and your family – physically and socially.

We have developed a list of ten interview questions that we recommend you ask a breeder before purchasing a puppy. This is not all-inclusive, but will alert you to any obvious concerns. Some questions cannot be answered by some breeders, so just be sure that you know the reason why.

1. Can I see photos of other grown puppies from the same sire and dam?

Look for the color, conformation, physical proportions, and overall appearance. If the sire and dam have had a prior litter together, the chances are good that the puppies in this litter will look similar.

2. How many females do you have that you breed? How many litters of puppies do you have right now?

If there are several females used for breeding, this could alert you to a "puppy mill" where the primary purpose is to generate money for the owners. Nobody is going to consider themselves to be a puppy mill, so asking the right questions can help you decide for yourself. Another aspect of having multiple litters is the fact that with multiple litters and more puppies, less attention will be given to the individual pups.

3. What is the living environment of the puppies between 4 weeks old and 8 weeks old?

Daily, how much time are they in a crate?...a pen?...free to run about?...indoor?...outdoor?

Weeks 4-8 is a critical time in a puppy's development. While they should spend some time in a crate (preparing for crate training), they need to have plenty of time to socialize with other puppies and the mother dog. The mother does a lot of training and discipline up until week 8, so this time with her is vital. You want a puppy that has been handled, cuddled, pet, brushed, and well-loved by people, too, as this sets the foundation for their interactions with their new owners.

4. Can you describe what types of sounds and surfaces the puppy will have been exposed to?

As puppies grow and mature, it is important that they have had the opportunity to experience a variety of sounds, surfaces, and textures. By doing so, any fears may be alleviated as they walk in different environments. Minimally, it is recommended that puppies experience a broad variety of sounds at home including television, kitchen appliances, vacuum, cars, trucks, wheelchairs, sirens, etc. They should also be walked on a broad range of surfaces including carpet, wood, tile, asphalt, grass, dirt, metal grates, concrete, leaves, sand, gravel, etc.

5. What do you feed your puppies as they are weaned off their mother's milk?

Look for foods and supplements that are rich in vitamins and minerals beyond just puppy food. This should include foods such as yogurt, goat's milk, cottage cheese, approved puppy vitamin supplements, etc.

6. When were the sire and dam seen to a vet last seen by a vet? For what?...and what were the results? What sort of medical issues have either of them had?

*Dogs should be seen by a vet **at least** annually. A good breeder will also have the female checked shortly before/during the pregnancy as well as shortly after the puppies have been whelped. Listen for symptoms or conditions that could signal genetic issues that could be passed on to the puppy. You want a pup from a sire and dam that have their health regularly overseen by a professional.*

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7. Has this puppy been seen by a vet?

YES: What were the findings?

NO: When will you have the puppy checked and what treatments or procedures will be completed before I would take the puppy home?

These details will vary by breed and breeder, but should include, at the very least, a new puppy visit at 8 weeks with the first set of shots given at that time. Additional treatments that are common include deworming, having the dew claws removed (within the first few days after birth), having tails/ears cropped (depending on breed), microchipping, etc. Listen closely to ensure that there is an outside objective professional that is checking out your future family member.

8. Have you noticed any distinctive traits when compared to the other pups in the litter?

Is this pup more withdrawn or outgoing? Light or heavy eater? Loud or quiet? Explorer or sleeper?

This is a great time to seek out the personality trait that you want at your home.

9. Do you have the names and numbers of two prior puppy buyers that I could call for a reference, please?

Ask the references about the buying process and if there was anything that they would have preferred or would have liked to have known beforehand. Ask if there have been any unexpected health issues. Very important, ask if they would purchase a puppy from this breeder again (and what led them to the answer they provided).

10. What is included in the overall purchase of the puppy?

This will vary by breeder but should include somethings to help the pup transition to the new home including a blanket or towel that they have slept on (and may have the mother's smell on it), some food that they pup has been eating for the past couple of weeks (to mix as you transition them to their new food), a play toy, possibly even a crate that has been used for training. All current shots should be administered and you should have a record signed by the veterinarian. If the puppy is from a registered breed, ensure that the litter has been registered and that you are provided with all of the necessary information to register your puppy.

A new puppy is sure to bring you many years of joy and companionship and, as a result, doing your research ahead of time may help to alleviate some unnecessary surprises and or disappointments. Best wishes in your puppy search and interview process!

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The contents of this document should not be construed to be all-inclusive of questions that should be asked of a potential breeder, but give a representation of subjects that should be discussed. Each individual buyer should perform their own due diligence to research a breeder. San Diego Goldendoodles is not responsible for any puppy purchase which may result from this interview guide.