

Choosing Your Next Dog - Purebred Versus Crossbred

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As a breeder of purebred dogs, you would expect me to automatically recommend that you purchase a purebred. The reality is that I like all dogs and I have certainly met some delightful crossbred 'mutts' over the years. However, rescue shelters are full of less successful crossbreds that are often the result of uncontrolled breeding between breeds that should never have been crossed. For instance, Jack Russell Terriers have the feisty nature of a Terrier and can be quite 'dog aggressive' but their small stature makes them manageable. Add 20 kilos by crossing a Jack Russell with a large breed and you may end up with a dog that is much more difficult to control.



If you decide on a purebred dog then you can at least do some research on the characteristics of that breed, visit dog shows and breeders and get a feel for the temperament of a particular bloodline. With crossbred puppies it really is a 'lucky dip'. If you see the parents you may get some idea of how big the dog may grow and what its personality might be, but if not you will have no idea of what you might end up with. I am not the sort of person who can simply re-home a dog once it has become part of the family, so if you are anything like me then you should choose carefully.



If you still want to get a crossbred dog then I suggest visiting a rescue shelter. These non-profit organisations take in many unwanted dogs, including purebreds, each year. They are unable to re-home many of them leaving euthanasia as the only option. On the down side, many of these dogs have 'baggage' from previous owners who may have mistreated them, but on the up side, you can get a better idea of what you are buying in terms of looks and personality as the dogs are often older. You also miss out on the difficulties of dealing with a puppy and many behavioural issues can be corrected with patience, care and the help of trainers and training organisations.



Puppies that get a good start in life as a result of their mothers having been kept in excellent health, through being wormed regularly, and being brought up on a good diet, will have fewer health issues as they get older. Although there are breeders of purebred dogs that may not care for their animals as well as they should, as a general rule, people who exhibit their dogs and are prepared to sell them with pedigree papers, generally take excellent care of their breeding stock and

their puppies. Their reputation is at stake and they are often contemplating keeping a pup from the litter themselves, which may be their next champion, so they can't afford not to care for their dogs well. Therefore, by buying a purebred dog from a registered breeder you may be more likely to get a puppy that has been fed well, vaccinated, wormed at the appropriate time, and had a health check by a vet.

I suppose I should include a quick word about 'designer dogs'. There has been a recent trend to produce weird and wonderful new combinations of 'cute crossbreds'- usually utilising the smaller, fluffier dogs. These have some truly weird and wonderful price tags as well! As far as I am concerned, these dogs are simply crossbreds and the same warnings I have already mentioned also apply. It is recognised amongst responsible purebred dog breeders that many dogs have genetic weaknesses and disease issues that require work to eliminate them from the breed through genetic testing and selective breeding. No such care is taken in the production of these designer dogs, nor is any consideration given to how one genetic defect may affect another when the two breeds are bred together. Personally, I think that purebred Poodles and purebred Cavalier King Charles Spaniels are cuter than crosses between the two, known as 'Cavoodles' anyway!

Whatever your decision might be, make sure you do your homework on the dog or breed you are thinking of getting. Rescue shelters have more than enough unwanted dogs and if people took more care in their choice of dog and their responsibilities as dog owners, perhaps they would have fewer dogs to care for, re-home or otherwise dispose of.

