

How to Choose a Puppy.

Missouri Veterinary Medical Association & Missouri Department of Agriculture

MVMA member veterinarians care very much about the welfare of dogs in breeding facilities in our state.

We have devoted our lives to the treatment of animals and the prevention of suffering and pain.

We oppose unlicensed, unregulated puppy breeders (puppy mills) in Missouri. Though great progress has been made, we continue to encourage high standards to ensure happy, healthy puppies can be provided to individuals and families seeking companionship.

Cases of neglect and bad conditions have come mainly from unlicensed breeders who are not overseen by state inspection.

You can do your part to help decrease the demand for dogs raised by unlicensed breeders. Here's how...

How To Choose A Puppy

1. A great way to pick a puppy is to go to a reputable, licensed animal shelter or rescue group. Not only are you going to get a great beloved family pet, but you are also helping to reduce the burden of unwanted pets. This is a win-win situation! Most local shelters keep a list of other area shelters and rescue groups, allowing you to find the right pet for your family even if that shelter doesn't have what you are looking for.

2. If you decide to purchase a puppy from a responsible and licensed breeder, make sure you do your homework. If you locate a breeder through a website, do not send money without speaking to the breeder, asking to see proof of a Missouri dog breeding license, and checking references first.

3. Don't be fooled by a well-designed website, as unscrupulous scammers will often create a professional looking, but fraudulent website designed to lure the potential puppy buyer in with cute puppy pictures.

4. If a free puppy sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

5. Once you select a breeder, screen the breeder. Ask to see at least one of the parents (the dam or the sire) of your puppy. See how the dogs in your breeder's home interact with your breeder. Are they friendly and outgoing, or do they shy away?



6. Ask to see the environment where the puppies are housed. Is it clean? How does it smell? Are the puppies crowded? Do they have access to food and water? Do they have adequate shelter from bad weather?

7. Evaluate the puppies' health. Do they appear happy and active? Do they have discharge coming from their eyes or nose? Do they have diarrhea? Can the breeder provide you with a medical record that indicates an exam was performed by a veterinarian and the dates and names of de-worming medications and vaccinations administered?

8. The responsible breeder will be screening you, too, looking for the best home for each puppy.

9. If you prefer a puppy from a reputable pet store, don't buy on impulse. Call the local pet store to learn of the origin of the puppies prior to ever visiting the store. Ask for specifics such as the location and phone number of the kennel(s) or broker(s) used. Is the kennel(s) licensed and inspected? Follow the same guidelines for evaluating the environment/health of the puppy at the pet store. If the store representative cannot answer your questions to your satisfaction, you may want to look elsewhere for your new puppy.

10. Take your new puppy to a veterinarian as soon as possible to determine if it is healthy or not.

REPORT THEM! DON'T SUPPORT THEM!

If you suspect an irresponsible breeder, report these individuals to the Missouri Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Operation Bark Alert at (<https://agriculture.mo.gov/animals/ACFA/barkalert/>).

Call the MDA at 573-751-3076 for information on licensed breeders in your area.

For more information on caring for your pet, log on to: www.movma.org.

