

December 2006 Gazette Column -

Should We Get A Puppy For Christmas?

How many times will this question be asked as we get closer to the holidays? How many people will make an impulse purchase at a pet store that they will later regret? How many dogs will be cruelly treated or passed from home to home in the coming months due to this impulse purchase? And (we) as responsible breeders (of all) breeds, need to take the time to educate potential puppy customers.

As I've said a zillion times in the past, the pet store is NOT the place to make your puppy purchase. First: they come from commercial breeders who mass-produce puppies for the pure profit of selling them at a very young age. Second: pet store employees have no knowledge of the genetic history of these dogs, nor do they know the breeders (usually puppy mills from the mid-West) who are supplying these dogs. Do you really think that someone who was probably selling shoes at last week, or working at the video store is going to have an intimate knowledge of each breed and their specific needs? If you answer yes to this question, you probably would also hire the deli clerk to re-wire your house and put new brakes on your car.

Again, NO REPUTABLE/ETHICAL breeder of dogs EVER has the need to sell their puppies out of a pet store. The breeder you should be looking for is the one near you who will counsel you on the breed of your choice, and who will be there for you and your dog for years to come. Perhaps the breeder in your area will not have puppies available. This person will gladly refer you to someone they trust. Yes, it is possible to buy dogs from breeders in other states, and sometimes that perfect puppy is shipped to you by plane. But your out-of-state breeder will have taken time to get to know you by phone so that they are sure they are sending the dog that will be right for you. They also will have set you up with contacts in your area that will act on their behalf in assisting you with your new puppy. And just because a dog has AKC paperwork, does not mean it is a quality dog. Pet store dogs have AKC papers. What they don't have is the reputation of quality breeders who's kennel names and reputations are recognized by their peers from coast-to-coast.

Many impulse purchases from the pet stores and backyard breeders fail and these dogs end up in a rescue program for various reasons. I asked Internet Miniature Pinscher Service (IMPS), the organization that grew from an online chat list of pet owners, to a nationwide group of caring individuals who specialize in taking in min pins that are Owner Give Ups (OGUs) that are placed directly with IMPS, and those that they rescue from shelters, why the numbers of dogs in foster care are so high. And at the time this article was being prepared, _____ dogs have come thru this rescue organization since it's inception in 1998. There is no way to count how many others ended up in shelters or were abandoned or just given away.

What are the top 5 reasons a dog ends up in rescue: Moving can't take, New Baby/children issues, House training (this is a tough breed to house train), Not enough time to spend with dog, Owner ill or died, dog has health or training issues.

Outside of routine vet care and spay/neuter, what are the top 5 health conditions seen most often, including accidents?: Diabetes (especially prevalent in overweight dogs), injuries due to being hit by car, Luxating Patella's/legg parthes, Heartworm Positive, (easily prevented by monthly medication and number 1 in the South), Age related illness such as cataracts, glaucoma, CHF, Arthritis etc.

Where do most of these dogs come from?: Pet Stores, Back Yard Breeders, Purchased from breeding kennels or puppy mills, purchased from private owner who could not keep.

Can you estimate the percent of dogs taken in from shelters verses private individuals? Average from combined answers: Shelter 60% Private individuals 40%

Approximately 12% of min pins whose owners want to give them up stay with their owners due to help from IMPS. This rescue organization offers training and behavioral advice, which should have been

provided to new owners by the breeder where they bought their dog.

As noted by one IMPS volunteer when asked where the dogs they get in rescue trace back to?
"Sometimes we have paperwork, which in my 5+ years with IMPS has always led back to a pupymill. Often the home will tell us the dog came from "a lady that breeds them" or a pet shop. We have never, to my recollection, had a dog come in that was from a reputable breeder."

Now, do you really want to make that trip to the pet store? And, you will probably pay 3-4 times more for a poorly bred dog with potential health problems in the pet store, than you would for a quality bred dog from a reputable breeder. Instead, please try the AKC breeder referral service at <http://www.akc.org/> for all breeds, or for Miniature Pinschers <http://www.minpin.org/>.

Please don't make an impulse decision at Christmas. And don't be misled by the "fad" breeds. Dogs being offered for sale as a cross between 2 different breeds (Goldendoodle, Labradoodle, Schnoodle, etc) are not purebred dogs, they are not rare or special. And it is NOT funny how much money the people selling them try to suck out of your wallets for what is essentially a mixed breed dog you can find at the pound.

The best time to bring a new puppy into your home is after the holidays, and take the time to meet your breeder before making a decision to bring in a new family member. The phrase is: A dog is for a lifetime, not just for Christmas. Those with extra special love in their hearts can contact Internet Miniature Pinscher Service to adopt a wonderful miniature pinscher.

Enjoy your holidays and good health to everyone in the New Year.

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