



The Golden Retriever Club of America, Inc.

Selecting a Breeder

Expectations and Questions to Ask

All puppies are hard to resist, and “cute” can cloud judgement, so it’s usually wise to learn about the breeder and the litter by phone or email before planning a visit. This document should help guide your evaluation, and may be printed to take notes initially when talking by phone and later when you meet in person.

WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT FROM A GOOD BREEDER

Contracts: Breeders should provide a companion puppy (non-show, non-breeding) sales contract that details certain responsibilities of both the buyer and the breeder. Be sure to read and discuss the contract before committing to buy the puppy, and don’t sign anything that you don’t intend to follow.

Health Certifications (Clearances): The Golden Retriever Club of America’s Code of Ethics strongly recommends that all breeding dogs have examinations by appropriate veterinary specialists and certifications indicating that the dog does not have hip or elbow dysplasia, or heritable heart or eye diseases. It’s wise to verify that the sire and dam have these certifications by asking for their registration numbers and using the QuickSearch feature at www.offa.org. For more information about heritable diseases, read *Health Screenings for the Parents of a Litter* at <http://www.grca.org/health/bigfour.html>.

More on Health: No dog or line of dogs is genetically perfect, and conscientious breeders have investigated the health issues in their lines. Buyers should feel free to ask about any subjects of concern to them, and reputable breeders will voluntarily point out potential health risks (all lines have some). In fact, open disclosure of the line’s negative information can be a mark of an honest, knowledgeable breeder.

Guarantees: No matter how carefully bred, risk of disease can never be zero. The best assurance of a healthy puppy lies in selection of the breeder, multiple generations of health certifications, and your preventive health care – and whether a specific health guarantee is offered in the contract is less important. Be wary of guarantees that require return of the dog before receiving compensation because ethical breeders don’t want to take your dog away, but unscrupulous breeders know that they usually won’t have to honor this kind of guarantee since most owners will not give up their dog.

AKC Limited Registration: Companion puppies are usually provided with Limited Registration, which means, among other things, that litters produced by that dog would not be eligible for AKC registration.

Spay/Neuter Contracts: It’s often recommended that puppies be neutered (refers to both sexes) by about 6 months of age, but research is increasingly showing that there is a complex mix of health benefits and risks associated with early neutering (prior to 12 months of age) versus later neutering (over 12 months). It is suggested that buyers learn about the effects of early versus later neutering in Golden Retrievers at <http://www.grca.org/pdf/health/EffectsEarlySpayNeuterPurina.pdf> so that each can make an informed decision – and then follow-up by checking that the decision does not conflict with the breeder’s contract.

2. Skin problems, allergies (itchy skin, runny eyes, frequent skin or ear infections, orange stains on toes from licking)?
3. Food allergy/sensitivity or frequent GI upset (needs special food, frequent loose stools)?
4. Epilepsy or seizures?
5. Lameness or stiffness (such as after exercise or upon waking)?
6. Pigmentary uveitis* (red, watery, or painful eyes, glaucoma, blindness)?
7. Ichthyosis* (flakey skin, greasy skin and coat)?
8. prcd-PRA, PRA1, PRA2* (night blindness, late onset blindness)?

* For more information, see <http://www.grca.org/health/index.html>

QUESTIONS A RESPONSIBLE BREEDER MIGHT ASK YOU

A responsible breeder is committed to finding a forever home for each puppy and will ask questions to be sure the pup is a good match for your family. Below is a sampling.

- Are you aware that raising a puppy well takes about the same amount of time and energy in the beginning as caring for a 2-year-old toddler?
- Will someone be home with the puppy for much of the time during the first month?
- Have you owned a dog before? What breed? What pets do you currently have?
- What activities or lifestyle would you like to share with your dog?
- What activity/energy level do you want in a Golden Retriever – high, medium or low?
- Are you planning to crate your puppy when it cannot be supervised?
- How many children do you have at home? What are their ages? Are they comfortable around large dogs?
- Do you have a fenced yard?
- Do you plan to take puppy kindergarten and/or obedience classes?
- How do you plan to exercise your Golden each day?