

What to do if you have suspicions about the breeder

If you suspect you have just met a puppy farmer or an unscrupulous dealer do not agree to purchase the puppy – this simply fuels the trade, causing even more puppies and breeding bitches to suffer.

Instead you should report the incident to your local authority or the local authority within which the breeder's premises are situated. Also contact the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on 0345 404 0506 and report your concerns.

Before you pay for your puppy

Make sure you are in possession of all the necessary documentation before you pay for your puppy. This includes:

- The microchip transfer paperwork which should have the microchip number on it. This is a legal requirement. (If you can borrow a microchip scanner you can always scan the puppy to check a microchip is there before you buy it).
- The worming records.
- The vaccination certificate if the puppy has had its first vaccination.
- The Kennel Club Registration paperwork if it is a Kennel Club Registered puppy.
- A written purchase agreement or receipt.

All this paperwork should be available at the point when you purchase the puppy. Be suspicious if the breeder offers to 'send it on later' – that probably won't happen!



The Puppy Buyer's Checklist ✓

National Animal Welfare Trust (NAWT) understands that sometimes it is the right choice for a family to decide to get a puppy rather than a rescue dog. With that in mind, NAWT has advice for people who have decided to purchase a puppy.

We have assumed you have considered the following:

- 🐾 **The commitment required for the life of the dog**
- 🐾 **The lifestyle changes and financial impact involved**
- 🐾 **Selecting the right breed for your home environment and exercise levels**

Be aware that the quality of puppy breeders can range from the Kennel Club Assured Breeders to the backstreet puppy farmers and the health and wellbeing of the puppy will also vary accordingly. Do not buy a puppy from a pet shop as it is likely to have originated from a puppy farm.

'Puppy Farmers' are commercial breeders who put profit before welfare, mass producing sick and poorly bred puppies which can be sold on to dealers and pet shops. Dealers will advertise over the internet or in free ads and can be very convincing in their claims to be the puppy's breeder. There have been many heart-breaking stories of people unwittingly buying puppy farmed puppies and ending up losing their new puppy because it was so sick.

No-one can resist a cute puppy, so it is important to ask all the right questions before you even go to see the puppy.

Most people understandably find it hard to walk away from the purchase once they are holding a cute, fluffy bundle, especially if they think they are 'rescuing' it from a miserable environment. In reality they are lining the dealer's pockets and sentencing an exhausted breeding bitch to yet another litter of puppies.



Ways you can support NAWT

We hope you found this guide helpful. NAWT believes in promoting responsible pet ownership as part of its rehoming and rescue work. It costs the charity £7,500 per day to care for our animals and this is something that would be completely unachievable without the incredible support of people like you. Please help and make a difference to our animals' lives today.



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Thank you



Questions to ask the breeder **BEFORE** you go and visit

About the breeder ✓

- Did they breed the puppy and were the puppies born at home?
- Will you be visiting the puppy at the place where they were born?
- How many were in the litter and will you be able to see the littermates?
- Will you be able to see at least the puppy's mother? (Breeders do use stud dogs so you may not always be able to see the father)
- Were the parents health screened for any hereditary conditions relevant to that breed and what were the results?
- Has the mother had any health issues?
- What is the mother's temperament like?

The answers to these questions should reassure you that you are buying from a genuine breeder who owns the mum, has bred the puppies themselves and is breeding from healthy parents of good temperament.

About the puppies ✓

- Have the puppies had any health problems?
- Have the puppies been regularly wormed?
- At what age will the breeder let the puppies go to their new homes? (Normally 8 weeks old)
- Will the puppy have its first vaccination before it goes home?
- Is the breeder working to a socialisation plan with the puppies? If so what sort of things has the breeder done?
- What brand of food are the puppies eating and are they eating well?

The answers to these questions should reassure you that the puppies have had the best start in life health-wise, have been well socialised with people and the home environment, that the breeder knows all about the puppies from birth and that the puppies are not leaving their mum too early.

Microchipping ✓

- Is the puppy microchipped and the breeder registered as the first keeper on an approved database?
- What is the microchip number?
- Will the microchip documentation be handed over with the puppy?

These questions enable you to establish that the breeder is compliant with the most recent legislation and is prepared to spend the extra money to comply.

The breeder should also be asking you lots of questions about your lifestyle, experience and suitability as an owner. They should show concern that their puppies all go to good homes. Perhaps they are keeping one of the puppies themselves – always a good sign.

If you have any concerns about the answers you are given to any of these questions, end the call and look elsewhere for a more reputable breeder. Do not arrange to visit the puppy as you will then most likely be caught in the web of an unscrupulous breeder.

If the breeder offers to meet you in a neutral location such as a car park or motorway service station, or offers to deliver the puppy rather than invite you to their premises, end the conversation as this is not a reputable breeder.



What to look for when visiting a puppy

The breeder ✓

- Is the mother there with the whole litter?
A mum should be interacting with the puppies, so beware of any stories about the mum being at the vets, or run over or similar as it could indicate they are puppy farm puppies.
- Are there several litters of puppies of different breeds around? This could indicate puppy farming.
- Is the breeder genuinely concerned about the puppies and can they tell you the individual characteristics of each puppy?
- Does the breeder handle the puppies and are they comfortable with it?
- If not there, ask to see a photo of the father of the puppies
- Do you feel you are being pushed into making a decision?



The premises ✓

- Do the premises look reasonably respectable?
- Are the puppies kept in the house?
Normally it is better if they are as they will be used to the normal household sounds. If they are kept in kennels are they clean and are the puppies brought into the house for socialisation time?
- Are there people around to regularly interact with the puppies?

The puppies ✓

- Do the puppies look clean, healthy and bright? Be wary of symptoms like runny eyes or noses, dull, matted or patchy coats, signs of diarrhoea, weakness or wobbliness or a puppy that sits forlornly in the corner.
- Are the puppies happily interacting with each other and showing that natural puppy curiosity?
- Have the puppies got plenty to play with?
- Are the puppies happy to be around and handled by strangers?
- Where are the puppies going to the toilet? Are they being housetrained?

