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## Pick of the Litter: Finding the Right Dog for Your Family

by Dr. Nancy Kay



So, you've decided to adopt a new dog. Perhaps this will be your only dog, or maybe you are adding to the "herd." Whichever the case, your primary goal is a healthy dog, so doesn't it make sense to start out with a dog you know is healthy? Whether you are adopting an adult dog or a puppy, and whether from a shelter, rescue organization, or breeder, make certain a veterinarian has provided a clean bill of health before you bring the new kid home. Remember, a claim that your prospective puppy or adult dog has been "vet-checked" says nothing about the



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veterinarian's actual findings, and you will be hard-pressed to "return" or "exchange" the new love of your life should your own vet discover a significant medical issue. Some tips to guide you on your search.

**Investigate local shelters.** Unless your heart is set on a purebred dog, I heartily encourage you to check shelters, <u>humane societies</u> and canine rescue groups (visit <u>PetFinder.com</u> to locate such organizations in your area).

Do your research. If you've decided on a purebred pup, do the necessary research to be sure that the size and temperament of the breed you've chosen is the right choice for you and your lifestyle. The American Kennel Club has a great resources page to get you started.

Find out if temperament testing is performed. Not only do you want a healthy dog, but you also want a dog that is behaviorally a good fit with you and everyone else who lives with you (including both two-

**Spread the word.** If you are open to the idea of adopting an adult dog, let the staff of your local shelter or humane society know what you are looking for. A surprising number of purebred dogs wind up there. Also contact breed-specific rescue organizations. Life's unforeseen circumstances (death, divorce, financial woes, etc.) cause many

**Find a reputable breeder.** If you wish to work through a breeder, the trick is in finding a reputable one, someone who is truly passionate about the breed she fancies. Not only should she be knowledgeable about the breed's history, but she should also know all there is to know

about their inherited health issues (every single breed has them),

wonderful dogs to end up with rescue groups.

temperament and special needs. Working with a reputable breeder provides the very best insurance policy that your new pup will have an ideal temperament and the genetic potential for a lifetime of good health. For pointers on finding a reputable breeder, visit <a href="http://speakingforspot.com/blog/?tag=finding-a-reputable-breeder">http://speakingforspot.com/blog/?tag=finding-a-reputable-breeder</a>.

Avoid "puppy mill" purchases. Puppy mills are large-scale breeding operations that produce puppies for profit, often under inhumane

conditions. By purchasing a puppy from a pet store or online (sight- and site-unseen), you may be inadvertently committing the next 10 to 15 years of your life taking care of an adorable but inherently unhealthy product of a puppy mill. One less purchase from puppy mills is one step

closer to their eradication. first appeared: 12/3/2010