



**FOR PUPPY'S SAKE  
KNOW  
YOUR BREEDER!**  
[www.westieclubmi.com](http://www.westieclubmi.com)

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT IN SELECTING A BREEDER

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There are many types of people who call themselves "**breeders**". There are puppy mills where breeding is done on a large-scale basis, often with little care for the parents, health issues, socialization issues or sanitation issues. Pet shops usually get their animals from puppy mills. There are those who breed their dogs for a few extra dollars, or to show their children the "miracle of life" or even by accident. They usually start with poor stock (often puppy mill dogs) and don't have a clue as to how to use genetics and testing to improve the chances of healthy offspring.

And there are **RESPONSIBLE** breeders. These are people who breed because they love the breed and want to actively be a part of improving it rather than as a way to finance their lifestyle. These breeders work long and hard, studying the genetics of the potential parents. They know their histories back for generations. They know what types of problems have cropped up in their litters, their parents' litters, their grandparents' litters, etc. They work hard to minimize or eliminate these health issues. They test the parents for likely diseases.

They stand behind their puppies for a lifetime. Their dogs never end up in Rescue because they will take them back if they need a new home. They show their dogs because they want an outside opinion of the quality of their dogs so they can continue to work to improve. The pets they sell were produced with just as much care as were the show dogs. YES, these puppies sometimes (not always!) cost more than those you find in the pet stores and newspaper ads. But it is because of the time and effort that has gone in to producing healthy puppies.

1. If a breeder claims to have "show quality" dogs, ask if they are involved in conformation competition. How would a person know how to recognize "show quality" if they themselves have never been to a dog show?
2. "Championship lines" means nothing. In the first place, breeders who claim to have "champion lines" often mean there are one or two champions in the pedigree. Often, in the pedigrees we deal with there are only one or two who are NOT champions! Besides, those who breed quality dogs know that there are champions, then there are CHAMPIONS. The fact that a dog is a Champion does not necessarily ensure its quality, nor does it mean that the breeder knew what they were doing in breeding Champion A to Champion B.
3. Can the breeder provide you with photos or videos of their dogs? If they can't, why not? (Note: Not all breeders have "high tech" capabilities and remember that a less than responsible breeder can give you a photo of just any Westie and claim it is theirs. Photos of the parents can be deceiving....often the puppy's type will revert back to previous generations. So take this item with a grain of salt.)
4. In what conditions have the puppies been raised? The ease of the Westie's housebreaking relies almost solely on how clean the puppies were kept as they were growing up---puppies raised in unclean conditions may NEVER be housebroken.

5. Is the breeder knowledgeable about raising puppies and proper socialization techniques? Puppies that are raised without high exposure to gentle handling, human contact and a wide variety of noises and experiences may exhibit a wide variety of behavioral problems.

6. Have the puppies' temperaments been evaluated and can the breeder guide you to the puppy that will best suit your lifestyle? A caring breeder will know the puppies and be able to make good matches between puppies and homes.

7. "AKC REGISTERED" means very little in reference to the quality of the puppy. AKC is merely a registry. All that "AKC REGISTERED" means is that the dog is purebred, assuming the breeder (and the breeders before this one in the pedigree of the dog) have been truthful about breeding purebred to purebred and registering the puppies as such. AKC does not police kennels for any other offense than not adhering to AKC's record keeping and dog identification rules.

NOTE: Recently there have been a rash of new registries, many of which are used by puppy mills to avoid the AKC expenses and attempts by the AKC to be a little more proactive. Most responsible breeders will continue to register with the AKC, UKC and CKC, since they all sponsor conformation shows and performance events. If you look at a puppy registered other than with the American Kennel Club, United Kennel Club or Canadian Kennel Club you might take this as a "red flag" and ask lots of questions.

8. "PEDIGREE" does not indicate the quality of a dog. All a pedigree is, is a family tree. A mixed breed dog in the street could have a family tree, if the person who bred that mixed breed dog knew who the father and mother were, and who their fathers and mothers were. So, the person who states, "My dog has a pedigree as long as my arm" is essentially saying he knows who the dog's parents were, and who their parents were, and so on. Yet, it does not in any way indicate the quality of those dogs.

9. Did the breeder ask you questions about your family, your lifestyle, your home? A concerned, caring breeder wants to know all about where his or her puppies are going!

10. Did the breeder ask you how much information you have about Westies, and did he or she offer to answer your questions about the breed or his or her breeding program? Did the breeder discuss the good and bad things about owning Westies with you, or did it all sound "pie in the sky"?

11. Is the breeder willing to refer you to people who have purchased his/her puppies in the past? Surely if a person has bred before, there are people who he or she can give you as references--- people who will tell you how happy they are with their dogs from this breeder. If not, why not???

12. Are pet puppies sold on spay/neuter contract and/or limited registration? If not, why not? This is a HALLMARK of a responsible, caring breeder.

13. Does the breeder offer a WRITTEN contract? If not, why not???. A responsible breeder will stand behind his or her puppies and cares about them for their lifetimes, not just until the check clears the bank!

#### TIPS FOR RECOGNIZING PROFIT-FOCUSED BREEDERS:

1. They make their living from selling dogs. They usually have a number of breeds, sometimes even as many as 10 or more. Anything beyond two breeds is borderline. They may have puppies all the time or claim they can get you any breed you want.

2. They don't ask you many questions, and they don't want to answer many, either. They may ask to meet you in a parking lot rather than let you see where the puppy was raised.
3. They do not know about (or care about) genetic problems or deny there are any in the breed.
4. Price comes up early in the conversation (usually first).
5. They will sell to anyone, for any reason. Their definition of "screening a buyer" is to be sure the person's check will clear the bank!
6. They have no contract. No guarantees. The only thing they are concerned with is THE MONEY!
7. If you are in doubt, call animal control in their area and ask if there have been any complaints against them. A negative doesn't guarantee the quality of the breeder but a positive answer might give you a lot of information.

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK A BREEDER:

1. How long have you been breeding Westies?
2. Why do you breed Westies?
3. What are the strengths and weakness of your breeding program?
4. In what conditions was the litter raised?
5. Are you familiar with the health problems in Westies?
6. Can you tell me why you put these 2 dogs together? May I see a pedigree on the litter?
7. What shots & wormings have the puppies had?
8. Who graded the litter and what qualified them to grade the litter?
9. Do you show dogs in conformation and/or obedience events?
10. What age do you let your puppies go to their new homes? (Do not take a puppy before it is AT LEAST 8 wks old, no matter WHAT!) Remember, puppy is doing a lot of learning while it is with mom and littermates. This is learning that will be hard for you to duplicate. Bite inhibition is just one example.
11. Do they send puppy home with feeding instructions and a bag or can of the food they were raised on or let you know ahead of time the brand of food so you can have it on hand.
12. Do they ask you to take the puppy for a vet check within 48 hours to confirm health of puppy?
13. Do they offer articles at time of sale on training, socialization, health issues, etc.
14. What are the negatives about this breed. Every breed has positives and negatives. Don't trust anyone who tells you that their breed is perfect!
15. Ask about older dogs. Breeders may well have an older dog they are retiring or that just didn't work out in their breeding program. You might prefer to not go through the early puppy routine. (Also check into Rescue)
16. Reputable breeders are impressed with people who are not impulse shopping. Your search for a puppy should take many weeks or months. Be willing to wait for the RIGHT puppy for you and your family situation.
17. What kind of contract/guarantees do they offer on the puppies? This is the most important question you can ask.

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**Go to this website and print out Westie 101 for more information on Westies.**