

We know that not every dog or cat lover will get their next pet from a shelter. Besides shelters, people obtain pets from many sources – pets being re-homed by family, neighbors and friends; puppies and kittens from unplanned litters; pet stores; farm auctions; flea markets; newspaper ads; fliers posted in public places and breeders.

While many pets obtained from any one of these sources live wonderful lives and are well loved, far too many end up again needing new homes or, worse, living lives of neglect or misery with owners who have lost all interest in them.

Adding a living, breathing animal to your family should be a deliberate, well thought out process. Many people are quite surprised at all the questions we ask of them in our shelter when they come to adopt a pet. We don't do this to make ourselves feel important or superior; we are trying very hard to make sure that the adoption is a good fit for the pet and for the new owner. Questions about lifestyles, the home environment, the adopter's expectations, children, etc, help us match the right pet with the right family. We do this because far too many of the animals who end up in shelters are there because this was not done when they first obtained that cute puppy or kitten and when the pet matures it turns out to be a bad fit for all concerned.

Just like there are good and perhaps not so good sheltering agencies, there are wonderful breeders who breed for the love of their breed and breeders who are only in it for money. Good breeders care about the homes they are placing their puppy or kitten (or horse, or bird, etc) in. Good breeders question potential buyers thoroughly to ensure the new owner will be able to provide a good home for the pet for its entire lifetime. Good breeders do not just sell a puppy or kitten to the first person who can pay the purchase price.

Good breeders make sure their puppies and kittens have a minimum of their first set of immunizations and de-worming. Good breeders have taken all the necessary measures to ensure their puppies/kittens are healthy and they do that by first taking the optimum care of the mother and also ensuring that 'dad' is just as healthy and well-adjusted. Good breeders do not sell their puppies or kittens at four & five weeks old.

Reputable breeders NEVER sell their puppies or kittens at a flea market, auction or out of the trunk of their car in a parking lot. Reputable breeders will decline a sale if they don't think it is in the best interest of the puppy or kitten. Reputable breeders care more about their animals than they do the almighty dollar. Reputable breeders help by becoming mentors to those who do purchase their puppies or kittens and stand by their pets. Truly reputable breeders are there for their puppies and kittens even years after the sale if the need arises. Reputable breeders are some of our best allies in terms of animal welfare as they work very hard to teach responsible pet ownership and most are very supportive of their local shelters.

So the next time you are thinking of adding a new pet to your family, take your time. Do your homework, make sure you are ready, check with a shelter perhaps and if you do choose to purchase from a breeder, take the time to make sure they actually care about their pets and their future. One way to find a conscientious breeder is to ask area veterinarians since caring breeders will be good clients of veterinarians as they both work to ensure the best health of the parents and the babies they produce. If everyone would take adding a pet as a serious commitment for the family and the pet, shelters would see a noticeable decline in animal intake and animal neglect and cruelty would very likely decrease as well.