



Guidance on choosing your new dog

Leading animal welfare organisations have been brought together by the BVA Animal Welfare Foundation to find practical responses to the problems highlighted in the BBC programme *Pedigree Dogs Exposed*. The Dog Breeding Stakeholder Group includes representatives from the [Blue Cross](#), [British Veterinary Association \(BVA\)](#), [BVA Animal Welfare Foundation \(BVA AWF\)](#), [Companion Animal Welfare Council \(CAWC\)](#), [Defra](#), [Dogs Trust](#), [Kennel Club](#), [PDSA](#), [RSPCA](#) and the [Universities Federation for Animal Welfare \(UFAW\)](#).

To help potential dog owners make the right choice for themselves and secure the ongoing good health and welfare of their new pet, the Dog Breeding Stakeholder Group has developed guidance for people seeking to buy a dog or puppy.

Please note that not all of the advice is applicable to people seeking to rehome a dog from a rescue shelter and prospective dog owners should seek further advice from the Blue Cross, Dogs Trust, PDSA or RSPCA.

Welfare principles

The Dog Breeding Stakeholder Group believes:

1. Every dog should be born with the best possible chance of living a healthy and happy life, well suited to its intended lifestyle.
2. All those who breed dogs should prioritise health, welfare and temperament over appearance when choosing which animals to breed, in order to protect the welfare of both the parents and offspring.
3. All those who benefit from dogs have a collective responsibility to work together to protect dog welfare.

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The Dog Breeding Stakeholder Group believes that as a prospective dog owner you should:

1. Carry out your research first. Different dogs have different needs and temperaments depending on, for example, their age, breed, health status, gender, and past experiences. A vet will also be able to give you information and advice on this; you can also get advice from the organisations associated with this document.
2. Take into account the average lifespan of the dog you would like to own and the estimated costs of lifetime care (both financially and in terms of your own time) before buying. Consider asking a pet insurance company how much it will cost to insure the type of dog you are considering taking on.

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3. Make sure that the dog you choose is suitable for you, your home and your lifestyle. A vet will also be able to give you information and advice on the health problems that certain breeds are prone to; you can also get advice from the organisations associated with this document.
4. Bear in mind your “duty of care” obligations under the Animal Welfare Act, which states that pet owners **MUST** ensure that each of the five welfare needs for animals under their care are met. These include the need:
 - For a suitable environment (place to live)
 - For a suitable diet
 - To exhibit normal behaviour patterns
 - To be housed with, or apart from, other animals
 - To be protected from pain, injury, suffering and disease
5. Avoid buying animals with exaggerated physical features that are likely to affect their quality of life, and don't base your decision on appearance alone. You should prioritise health, welfare and temperament over appearance when choosing a dog.
6. Always see your puppy with its real mother in the environment where it was raised, and ask to see its brothers and sisters, if they are still there. Make sure that you know who the father is and that you get an opportunity to contact its owner. Ensure that the parent(s) and the puppies are happy and healthy and that the environment is suitable to meet all the puppy's welfare needs.
7. It is important to ensure that your puppy is well socialised and has had appropriate good experiences. Ideally, your puppy should also have had good experiences with people, some other types of animals and in the places and situations it is likely to encounter as an adult, including a normal home environment.
8. Ask to see the puppy's health records and ensure that these are available by the time you buy the puppy (this includes any records of vaccination, worming and flea treatment as well as other veterinary treatment). Also check that the puppy's parents have taken appropriate health screening tests relevant to the breed and ask if the puppy or its parents have received any veterinary attention relating to an inherited problem. These should be available for you, or your vet, to take a look at.
9. Make sure your puppy stays with its mother until a suitable age. This may vary, but normally would be until 8 weeks of age.
10. For pedigree puppies, ensure that any recognised registration papers and the parents' hereditary disease screening certificates, where appropriate, are in order and available at the time you buy the puppy.

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