

Choosing a Breeder for Designer Dogs Dog Fancy Interview January 11, 2006

As President of the Cockapoo Club of America, I cannot speak for all “designer dogs” I can only speak for Cockapoo Club of America, American Cockapoos™ so the questions below are specifically for potential American Cockapoo™ owners. To me Cockapoos are not a “designer dog” they are a passion and a way of life. I have owned Cockapoos for 37 years. I got my first one when I was nine years old. Our first Cockapoo “Wendy” was the best dog our family had ever owned. She was bred by my Girl Scout Leader and my mom’s best friend, Glenn Pfahl. When my husband and I were married 20 years ago we got two black female Cockapoo littermates “Tara and Tiki” who were our first and second born...then we had our three children. We have owned and loved Cockapoos ever since. My brother has two Cockapoos. This is not a passing fancy for us, owning Cockapoos is part of our happy lifestyle. It improves one’s quality of life.

1. How do potential American Cockapoo™ owners go about finding a good dog breeder?

To find an honest reputable breeder Go to www.cockapooclub.com and in the upper left corner click on “Star Rated Breeders”. There the Cockapoo Club of America breeders are listed in alphabetical order according to how many stars they have earned, the highest first. Breeders have to EARN their way onto that page. You can only get an American Cockapoo™ from a Cockapoo Club of America Breeder Member who has AKC registration provable dogs who are annually CERF’ed free of genetic eye disease and OFA certified free of genetic patellar luxation. A Cockapoo from a breeder outside the CCA is NOT considered an American Cockapoo™.

2. How can potential buyers determine if a breeder is ethical and responsible?

The CCA has done that for you on our Star Rated Breeder page. If we have substantiated complaints on a breeder we REMOVE them and no longer recommend them. The CCA Star Rated Breeders listed have an outstanding reputation or we don’t recommend them.

BUT FOR BREEDERS WHO ARE NOT LISTED THERE...here are some things to look for and some questions to ask: Please note: the following questions may incite hostility in breeders who cannot measure up. This hostility should be your first red flag. Remember, you cannot purchase an American Cockapoo™ from anyone other than a Cockapoo Club of America Breeder Member.

A *Are they using AKC registered pure bred American Cocker Spaniel bred to AKC purebred Poodle so they know it is a pure Cockapoo that is half Cocker and half poodle and not just any cute mixed breed dog?*

B *If they are breeding Cockapoo to Cockapoo are the Cockapoos half AKC*

Cocker and half AKC Poodle? Do they have copies of the original AKC papers for the grandparents of the Cockapoo being bred and a pedigree (family tree) tracing back to the origin of the breed? A Cockapoo is half Cocker and half Poodle not $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ or any other combination. If a Cockapoo is bred to another Cockapoo both must have paperwork proving their lineage.

C *Does the breeder provide a three or more generation pedigree (family tree) included with the puppy showing no inbreeding and no line breeding?*

D *Are the pedigree lines clean and free of genetic disease?*

E *Does the breeder do an annual eye exam called a CERF exam to check for genetic eye disease before breeding? CERF stands for Canine Eye Registration Foundation the "CERF exam" is performed by a board certified veterinary ophthalmologist. This is a simple non invasive exam that costs a mere \$45.00 per dog, (less if the breeder participates in a CERF clinic). The potential breeding dog is taken to the board certified veterinary ophthalmologist and dilating drops are put into the eyes. The dog is then examined with three different microscopes to check for the presence of any eye disease. If the results are normal the dog passes the CERF exam and may be bred. If a genetic disease is found the ophthalmologist can advise if the dog should be bred or not. Since different eye diseases show up at different ages in different breeds this exam is essential for every breeder of every breed of dog to ensure healthy puppies. The CCA breeds puppies that will be family members...not "dogs"...so CERF is essential before breeding a dog. We do the best we can to ensure a CCA American Cockapoo™ puppy will have sight when it grows up. The parent dogs CERF exam certification documentation should be included with the puppy upon purchase and should be shown to the puppy purchaser before purchase upon request.*

CERF has a website at www.vmdb.org/cerf.html A potential puppy purchaser can go online, click on "CERF Certification Online Verification", click on the name of the breed of dog and the name of the dog being bred and view the CERF certification online! It will give the dog's name, birth date, CERF number, exam date, the history of exams (years the dog was examined) and Breeders Option Diagnoses if any. This is a FANTASTIC tool for puppy purchasers. This way they can verify the CERF online. If the breeder has done a CERF exam and not sent the paper work into CERF ask why.

F *Does the breeder do an OFA patellar luxation exam? Can they provide you with copies of the certification? OFA stands for the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals. The OFA has a database to identify those dogs that are phenotypically normal prior to use in a selective breeding program. The OFA has a website at www.offa.org The OFA maintains databases on Patellar Luxation, Thyroid, Congenital Cardiac, Hip Dysplasia, and Elbows to name a few. For more information call 573-442-0418 or visit their website at www.offa.org. Applications and brochures are available upon request by calling the OFA or they can be printed online. Many OFA certifications are inexpensive an OFA patellar luxation*

exam costs about \$36.00, is included in the price of a regular health exam. It does not require x-rays and can be done by a licensed veterinarian by palpating the patella between his thumb and index finger to determine if the patella luxates or dislocates. It is only required once in the lifetime of the dog after they reach one year of age. ie: For patella's they can be certified after one year of age. For hips two years of age. Hip certification is required for larger breed dogs and is more expensive since the dog needs to be anesthetized and x-rays taken. All supporting documentation should be provided to the consumer upon request and copies of the certifications given when a puppy is purchased.

A potential puppy purchaser can go to the OFA website at www.offa.org and type the name of the dam or sire into the "QUICK Search OFA Records by Registration Number, OFA number, or Name" box and click "GO!" the dog's history will come up and so will the results of the certifications. Try this with my American Cockapoo™, Tessa Montanari. It is a FANTASTIC tool for potential puppy purchasers!!! I am very excited about this!

G Check for complaints on a breeder before purchasing a puppy. You can contact:

The American Kennel Club - You can verify that the breeder is using AKC Cocker and AKC Poodle that are registered in their name by calling AKC at 1-919-233-9767.

You can also check for complaints or an open inquiry (an "open inquiry" is when the AKC has detected problems with the breeding program and the breeder is on probation).

The Cockapoo Club of America by calling 818-438-0887.

Animal Control in the county in which the breeder resides

The Better Business Bureau

The Attorney General

The Humane Society

H Ask for three or four references and call ALL of them to talk about the puppy purchasers experience with the breeder. Be especially careful if you plan to ship a puppy. Be sure to talk to someone who has VISITED the facility and can tell you about it.

I You should be allowed to meet the parent dogs. If the parent dogs are not present that is a red flag. It could be a front for a puppy mill. The mother dog should be kept with her puppies until the puppies are completely weaned. Many puppies nurse until 7 weeks of age. Solid food is introduced at about 4 or 4 ½ weeks of age but the puppies continue to nurse throughout the weaning process. The puppies are not eating well on their own for a few weeks. Taking a puppy away from mom and littermates too early is not in the best interest of the puppy. Puppies cannot be legally shipped on an airplane until 8 weeks or older. Shipping a puppy before that can jeopardize the health of the puppy.

J A good breeder will welcome a puppy purchasers questions and thoughtfully

answer them. If a breeder is not kind, respectful, and patient before they have sold a puppy, how do you think they will react if you have a problem with the puppy? A good breeder will be interviewing the puppy purchaser while the puppy purchaser is interviewing the breeder and listening to the potential owner of their precious puppy to see if they would provide a loving and appropriate home.

3. A red flag to identify a problem breeder could include:

- A** No parents on the premises
- B** No AKC papers on the origin of the breed
- C** No Pedigree
- D** No genetic Testing: No CERF, No OFA patellar luxation
- E** Not willing to let you visit before puppies are born to meet parent dogs.
- F** Not willing to let you visit puppies before it is time for them to go home.
- G** Let puppies go too early.
- H** Hostility towards your questions.
- I** No phone number to reach them directly only available through email.
- J** Any complaints filed with any organization listed above in question #2, answer G ie:
 - a.** The American Kennel Club if the breeder is using AKC Cocker and AKC Poodle by calling them at 1-919-233-9767 to check for complaints or an open inquiry (when the AKC has detected problems with the breeding program and they are on probation).
 - b.** The Cockapoo Club of America by calling 818-438-0887.
 - c.** Animal Control in the county in which the breeder resides
 - d.** The Better Business Bureau
 - e.** The Attorney General
 - f.** The Humane Society

4. What questions should a buyer ask a breeder?

A puppy purchaser should ask a breeder everything they want to know and everything mentioned in my answer to question number 2 above.

5. How can buyers distinguish differences between a designer dog breeder and puppy mill breeders?

Visit the breeder. A puppy mill usually will not let you visit. They send their puppies to a pet store or a puppy broker without the parents, or to a person who claims to be a relative of the breeder in a different city or state, or they make up an excuse why the parents aren't there. A puppy mill has filthy conditions and may keep dogs in rabbit hutches. 20/20 the TV program did a special on puppy mills that was horrifying. Ask to see where the parent dogs are kept and where the puppies are whelped and kept.

6. How can buyers distinguish between breeders interested and dedicated to starting a new dog breed, and breeders only interested in making money while designer dogs are popular?

Ask them why they are breeding. Ask them every question in question number 2

above. Ask them if they are keeping documentation on their puppies for the CCA registry and registering their puppies in the CCA registry.

7. Why are designer dogs so popular now?

American Cockapoos™ are popular right now because baby boomers (like myself) who owned Cockapoos when they were children want to repeat the experience for their children and their grandchildren. Cockapoos are a great family pet. Families with allergies or asthma who can't tolerate other animals can usually tolerate American Cockapoos™ since they tend to be hypoallergenic, no to low shedding and have no doggy odor. They are a fantastic, friendly, family pet. They are the welcoming committee and they love children and guests. They don't tend to bite. They are very forgiving, loving, and affectionate and are bred to be the perfect companion animal. They are content to do what you want to do just like the perfect companion. If you want to go for a walk, take a nap, play ball, an American Cockapoo™ is game for what ever you are. They are also the perfect "child" for empty nesters and couples who for whatever reason cannot have children. They are a clean indoor pet.

8. What genetic tests do designer breeders usually perform on their dogs?

Cockapoo Club of America Breeders do CERF annually and OFA Patellar Luxation certification at a minimum to be listed on our website. Some do OFA Hips, and Cardiac Database as well. Genetic testing is ESSENTIAL for a selective breeding program and should be REQUIRED by consumers of ALL dog breeds.

9. Do designer dog breeders offer health guarantees?

Talk to each individual breeder about their health guarantee. A puppy purchaser should receive a written contract that they sign when they purchase a puppy. Most Cockapoo Club of America breeders do offer a health guarantee. The Six Star Rated Breeders and many others offer a one year guarantee against life threatening genetic defects. If anything life threatening is discovered in the first year they will refund your purchase price or replace the puppy with another one from an upcoming litter. There are puppy lemon laws in some states like CA and NY that protect puppy purchasers from irresponsible breeders. Check with the Attorney General in the state in which the breeder resides not the state in which the purchaser resides. The laws that would apply are for the breeder's state. Each breeder writes his/her own sales contract so check with the individual you are considering purchasing a puppy from for their guarantee.

10. Are designer dogs healthier than purebred dogs? Please explain.

A puppy is only as healthy as it's parents, grandparents, great grandparents, etc. To breed a healthy puppy, genetic testing must be done and only HEALTHY dogs must be bred. This is called "selective breeding". Purebred dogs have been traditionally "line bred" and in-bred to solidify the physical characteristics. Line breeding is breeding related dogs, mother to son, father to daughter. We at the Cockapoo Club of America **DO NOT DO THIS**. If there are any recessive defects and a breeder line breeds, the chances are great that the defect will be

present in the puppies. At the Cockapoo Club of America we only breed non-related pairs. We carefully study the pedigree on each dog to determine the ancestry and only breed non-related dogs. This provides a wider physical standard but it also provides a wider gene pool and can create a healthier dog because of this.

Remember that when you meet the parent dogs, you meet your puppy in the future. Temperament is inherited. Larry Shook in "The Puppy Report" states that as much as 80% of the temperament comes from the mother dog and 20% or more from the father dog. It is important to meet the parent dogs to avoid purchasing a puppy with temperament problems, excessive shyness, aggression, fear aggression, etc.

Thank you and Dog Fancy for your interest in the Cockapoo Club of America and the American Cockapoo™. If you have further questions please feel free to contact me at 818-438-0887. I would welcome with enthusiasm any questions you may have.

Cockapoo Joy,
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