

Happy Homes for Happy Pets

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One of the most difficult aspects of dog breeding is the placement of our beloved puppies into new homes. There are show quality pups to be placed and, inevitably, there are those pet quality babies needing good homes. I am going to address the issue of placing those pet quality puppies.

It has been said to me more than once that adopting a baby is easier than getting one of my pups. Usually this has not been said in a congenial manner, however, I've always taken it as a compliment. It is crucial to have a method of screening calls to ensure the best home for your kids.

When someone calls, I let the caller ask all the questions they want - in fact, the more the better. Inevitably, they ask all the wrong questions - the colossal error being that of first asking the price. When the price of the pup is the first, and, seemingly, most important thing on the mind of a prospective owner, I am immediately turned off. I don't believe I have ever sold a puppy to anyone whose first inquiry was, "how much?"

Having answered every conceivable question of the caller, in a very polite manner I then ask, "Now that I've answered your questions, may I interview you?" This always takes them aback. Many people seem to have the attitude that they are doing you a favor by buying one of your pups. Realizing that many readers will strongly disagree with my criteria as to who is a suitable candidate for one of my "pets", I will share some questions I use to separate the roses from the thorns.

First, I ask, "Do you have children between the ages of one and ten?" If they do, we need go no further, as I will not sell a puppy to a home with small children. Past experience has taught me that no matter how well intentioned the parents may be, young kids and Min Pin puppies don't mix. The margin for error is just too wide. Invariably, the child will find himself alone with the puppy. It seems universal that young children like to corner a dog, often resulting in broken bones in the pup or a nasty bite in the child. There are ample homes for pets, so why flirt with danger?

Secondly, I ask, "Do you have a fenced-in yard?" Again, if the answer is "no", we usually go no further. I realize there must be a lot of well trained Min Pins who eagerly come when called, but I haven't seen many of them. I've seen a great deal more Min Pins who only know their name when the occasion suits them. Considering that pet owners will want to housebreak their animals, I don't want to risk having one of my pups shoved out the back door, unaccompanied, with no fenced enclosure. There are minor exceptions to this rule, such as paper training in apartment buildings, but in the main it's, "no fence, no dog." Call me picky.

Next I ask, "How will the dog be housed and taken care of?" It fascinates me how many people have given this no thought. If the response is that the dog will be shut in the bathroom or laundry room from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., again, it's "no dog". Realizing that most people work during the day, the bathroom/laundry room is OK, but only if someone comes in halfway through the day to take care of Rover. This means some play time as well as refilling the water bowl and cleaning up stool and urine. For overnight, I insist on either a crate or cardboard box large enough for the dog to stand up and turn around in. I can't fathom a young Min Pin left to wander around a house all night. Talk about nightmares!

Space doesn't permit me to go into complete detail as to my entire interview process, but these three questions go a long way towards determining if your Min Pin puppy will go into a suitable home.

It is important to let pet owners know that a great advantage of buying from a reputable breeder is that if the puppy doesn't work you will take it back. With this thought in mind, along with the welfare of the dog, why not eliminate barriers to a successful placement ahead of time?

If the caller can answer these questions in a satisfactory manner, then it is time to set an appointment for them to come see the puppy. Of course, when they come to see the puppy, the real scrutiny begins. You evaluating them, not them evaluating the puppy!