

Crossing the line between Responsible and Restrictive

I consider myself a responsible and ethical breeder. I believe that is how I am perceived by my peers and those who know me personally and/or have any of my dogs. For many years, I have been outspoken in favor of responsible breeders with contracts, neutering all “pets” that are not being shown, and doing a lot of breed education via phone and email, and educating people on why NOT to buy dogs from pet stores and backyard breeders. I interview potential pet owners and take every possible step to insure that a puppy or retired adult goes into a safe and wonderful home. And my position on this has not changed.

But is there a point where we carry this inquisition too far, and impose too many restrictions for someone who wants to own and enjoy one of our dogs? I recently found out how frustrating it is for non-show people to get a dog from a “responsible” breeder and I understand why people just go to the pet store or buy from newspaper ads. Take a moment to go look in the mirror and ask yourself if YOU (and I) are partially to blame.

First case: Scott, my adult nephew owns his own landscaping business, is recently married and owns his own home with a huge yard securely fenced in chain link. Several months ago he asked me to help him find a specific breed of dog that would fit his lifestyle based on the research he had done through AKC. He wanted a puppy, as a house dog and companion. No showing no breeding no hunting. Spay as soon as dog was old enough. We are still searching for a puppy and he is going through the interview process.

Second case: Chuck is one of my town councilmen and his son is a policeman in town. He and his wife are looking for an “adult” med-large sized short haired dog. Perhaps a young retired show dog, or a dog that needs to be re-homed or a rescue. They definitely do not want a puppy. Their two children are all grown and they have young grandchildren at their home each Sunday. They want a dog to spoil and be their “third” child. Obviously temperament is their first consideration, not “show” quality.

Both asked me to refer them to good breeders so they could begin the interview process and start their search. I fully expected that each breeder they contacted would do their own interview and take my recommendation into consideration.

I sent emails to parent club breeder referral persons of the breeds they were interested in. I introduced myself, and included my involvement in dogs. I told them in detail about each person and asked them to contact me if they had potential puppies available or refer me to someone else in their breed. Price was never mentioned.

I got NO responses, even from some local calls I made. I called again. 2 months went by, with NO responses.

Recently I sent emails to their regional specialty breed clubs and was very pleased at the responses I received and the referrals to other breeders and to these people I say, Thank YOU!

I had what I thought was the PERFECT match for Chuck and his wife and it was local, so a face-to-face interview would be very easy. This should have been an easy one. Then I got a call from Chuck on Saturday and he said he had “given up” on finding this particular breed and was just going to go the SPCA and get himself a mutt, and that everyone one of those “show people” he had talked to were “wacky” and there were so many restrictions with each dog or they did not want to talk to him when he said he wanted a “pet”. He has 4 ft chain link, they wanted him to have minimum of 5 ft. This is a huge double lot, and that fencing kept in their previous Great Dane and Doberman. Chuck is over 6 ft. tall, and a big man. But he was told “the dog is strong and could be aggressive on lead, you may not be able to handle it on walks.” (Hey... I would expect a retired champion to have better leash manners). I’m seeing red flags here, and what are these breeders picking up on that I do not know? So I suggest I bring a min pin with me and come over to his house for a visit in the next 10 minutes. My first instinct was to do some immediate damage control regarding breeders etc. before he told everyone about his negative experiences in trying to find a dog. So I threw a min pin in the car and drove off intending to look for reasons for the “red flags”. There are no reasons. They have a beautiful home, and the property is immaculate inside and out. Huge double corner lot, securely fenced, with a covered flagstone

patio. The wife works at home 3 days per week and out of the house only one day. I wish I could live here. This woman has NO dishes sitting in her sink (to me, THAT is weird!)

My min pin had a ball checking out the house and yard. Finding the grandbaby's stuffed toys and settling in on the couch next to Chuck or fee stacking for treats from his wife and working her "min pin magic" while we chatted. Since their preference was for a larger dog, I had not considered them as a potential customer for a min pin, and was just happy to help in their search for a larger dog. They asked if the min pin would be gentle enough and not step on a 5 month old baby when it was on the blankie on the floor. A min pin isn't exactly a klutz so I am confident it won't step on a baby's face, but they have been known to snatch a "pacie" and run off with it, or de-sock a toddler. I have one that jumps on the bed and pulls the PJ's off her little human on a regular basis amid delighted giggles.

Gosh I hope they change their mind on size and choose a min pin. I would love to have one of my kids live with them.

But again I ask the question. Are we as breeders imposing too many restrictions on our potential pet owners? We complain about the pet store dogs, puppy-mill breeders and back-yard breeders. But are WE pushing potential pet owners in that direction? We need to cultivate good pet homes. Not all dogs are show dogs. There are great pet owners who live in apartments or who work all day. Before I bought a house I had 5 dogs and lived in an apartment and worked every day, and none of my dogs needed therapy. Yes, we have to kiss a lot of frogs to find a prince, but put the shoe on the other foot. As a potential customer it is one thing to make them jump through hoops to get a dog, but do we really need to set those hoops on fire?

Faith K. Gordon, 15 Elkhart St, Lackawanna, NY 14218 MPCA web page: www.minpin.org Do you have room in your heart for a rescue dog?