

What is a "Responsible" breeder?

This is a difficult category to define, but there are certain minimum standards that are accepted as "responsible" by most who are active in the dog fancy. Following are some of the things a responsible breeder will be doing:

All breeding stock will be certified free of Hip Dysplasia by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA). Elbows may also be certified as free of Elbow Dysplasia; this is a relatively new trend and some older dogs/bitches may not be certified. The breeder will be willing to supply you with copies of the OFA certificates. No bitch or dog will be bred before the age of two, (the minimum age for OFA certification). OFA does issue preliminary evaluations of hips and elbows, but actual certification will not be done before two years.

Breeding stock will be certified free of inherited eye disease annually by a Board certified Veterinary Ophthalmologist; the certificate is issued by the Canine Eye Registry Foundation (CERF).

Bitches and dogs used for breeding will have achieved certain competitive titles such as AKC Champion or obedience titles (CD). Responsible breeders will usually not breed dogs and bitches whose quality has not been proven in competition, although under certain circumstances (injuries which prevent competition) they may.

The Breeder will belong to one or more Dogue de Bordeaux Clubs which require adherence to a "Code of Ethics" from all members (adherence to a certain level of responsibility in ownership and breeding).

The AKC parent club in the U.S. is the Dogue de Bordeaux Society,

The Breeder will be active in the sport of dogs, competing in conformation, obedience, agility or other canine sports.

A responsible breeder will not give you a "hard-sell" routine when you call to inquire about his/her dogs. Usually he/she will be trying everything they can to discourage you from buying a DDB. A reputable breeder's number one concern is that his/her puppies are placed in responsible homes where they will receive the same kind of care and training he/she gives his/her own dogs. Expect to be interviewed at length as to why you want to own a French Mastiff, and what your family and lifestyle is like. The reputable breeder will ask more questions of you than you will of him/her.

A responsible breeder will try to steer you clear of rushing to buy a puppy this week or this month, but he/she will also not expect you to wait an unreasonable amount of time to buy one of his/her puppies. If he has no puppies available and has no breeding planned in the near future, he will recommend other breeders whose standards are as high as his own.

A responsible breeder will be happy to have you meet the parents of the litter (at least the dam; frequently the sire will not belong to the breeder), as well as his/her other dogs. The dogs and puppies will be kept in a clean and healthy environment.

A responsible breeder will only sell puppies with a signed, written contract. He/she will pass on accurate health, breeding and registration records and pedigree records of at least three generations. They will require that any puppy not purchased as show and breeding stock be made incapable of reproducing, and require that limited registration "blue slips" be provided, or that registration papers be withheld until a veterinarians certificate is received as proof of sterilization.

What is the difference between pet and show quality?

"Show Quality" is a term that is often misunderstood and misused. It can mean something as simple as a puppy with no disqualifying faults (as listed in the breed standard) at the time of sale. The serious buyer looking for a potential winner or breeding stock had best spend time going to dog shows and talking to exhibitors as well as studying the standard for the breed. Serious and disqualifying faults to avoid include overshot or level bites, missing teeth, long or curly coats, wrong eye color, kinked tail, hip dysplasia and unstable temperaments. All lines carry one or more of these traits, and a responsible breeder will be able to give you a candid description of what is in your animal's genetic background. Be aware that the nicest puppy in the litter can mature into a very mediocre adult. Be prepared to critically evaluate your dog, because even if you paid a good price you may still end up with a pet.

"Pet Quality": many time breeders will offer puppies with serious faults for lower prices than show quality. These faults are generally cosmetic (bad bites, white spots other than on the chest or feet , kinked tail, etc.) and will not affect the health or temperament of the dog. These animals are not for breeding because these are serious genetic faults. A responsible breeder will require that the animal be spayed, neutered or vasectomized before releasing the AKC registration papers. Breeders may now sell their puppies on the AKC Limited Registration Certificate, which allows the dog AKC privileges of obedience activities but will not allow showing in the conformation ring or use for breeding purposes. These dogs make good companions and often their faults are not detectable to any but the most experienced eyes.