



Southernwind German Shepherds promotes responsible breeding and ownership of the German Shepherd dog and part of our mission is to educate potential owners of this special working breed on how to properly select a well bred German Shepherd puppy for their family. Selecting a responsible, reputable breeder who is producing correct dogs is of the utmost importance, especially when we as a community of German Shepherd enthusiasts strive to protect and preserve the integrity of our breed.

When potential German Shepherd owners select a badly bred puppy, they will be faced with a lifetime of problems which can include temperament issues (*aggression, reactivity, poor nerves, fearful, etc*) and health issues (hip dysplasia, degenerative joint disease, allergies, EPI, irritable bowel disease, etc). When a potential German Shepherd owner selects a reputable, responsible breeder they drastically reduce the chances of having a dog with such issues. By supporting only reputable breeders, we can slowly weed out the irresponsible ones and will eventually see less unsound dogs in society. This is something that will only happen if potential owners support those who truly wish to improve and preserve the quality of German Shepherds in the world.

First and foremost, a responsible breeder of German Shepherds is educated and experienced with the breed. A responsible German Shepherd breeder can discuss the breed standard at length, understands the history of the breed, and has great knowledge of the breed's temperament, conformation and purpose. With this knowledge they are able to produce a specific type of dog to which they hold high standards and expectations. There is purpose behind their breeding program and they do not simply breed two dogs together without concern for how they compliment one another or what those two dogs could produce.

Knowledge of pedigrees and bloodlines within the breed comes into play when breeding. A responsible breeder knows the dogs they are breeding in depth, including those of which are in a dogs pedigree. This knowledge of the ancestors of two breeding dogs helps breeders determine the temperament, health, conformation, workability and nerve outcome of the puppies they strive to produce.

Just as important as the aforementioned in-depth knowledge of the breed, testing the breeding stock for quality is of vital importance. If breeding dogs are not tested for breed specific and common health issues, there is absolutely no way to prevent puppies from developing these devastating and painful conditions. Testing breeding dogs and their ancestors (other dogs in a dogs pedigree) for these issues ensures that there is a low chance of passing on any genetic diseases or conditions. The best way to avoid bringing home a puppy who could develop hip dysplasia is to only buy a puppy from a breeder who has tested the sire (father) and dam (mother), certifying them free of dysplasia. That breeder should also have the pedigree information of both dogs stating their parents, grand-parents, great grand-parents and so on are also free of hip dysplasia. This goes for every genetic disease and condition; Certification of health in both parents of the puppy AND their ancestors will lower the chances of these problems occurring in your puppy significantly.

Temperament and working ability is just as important as health, especially in a working dog breed like the German Shepherd dog. Bred originally for herding, and later used heavily for police and military work, the German Shepherd dog requires a very special and balanced temperament in order to fulfill its purpose. Temperament, workability, versatility, drives, nerves and all other aspects of the dog can be assessed and verified via training, competition and judgement from officials. Even if you do not want to compete in any sports or work your dog, you still want a dog that is capable of it. Saying you "just want a pet, not a show or working dog" could leave you with an unsound dog who is not capable of doing the things it was bred to do. Just because your German Shepherd will be a family companion, doesn't mean you have to settle for anything less than a sound, healthy and trust worthy dog.

Be leery of breeders who breed for size, colour or anything superficial. Avoid breeders who claim to have "the best of the best" with zero evidence of such quality. Do not look at the impressive website using buzz words and claiming commercial fame, as many breeders will pretend to be the best and claim such while producing poor quality puppies. ALWAYS LOOK AT THE DOGS, never the website or the claims spread across the pages. Verify certifications, ask to see competition awards and certificates, ask to meet the dogs in person, ask for videos or to see the dog training or working. Do not take someone's word for it, see it with your own eyes.

Some irresponsible breeders will "cut corners" with titles and health certificates in order to charge more money and sell more puppies, and this should be a red flag to puppy buyers.

Claiming to have x-rays of hips on file, but not having them certified by an official organization such as the OFA or the FCI/SV is not acceptable in terms of quality and health control. It is easy to certify hips and elbows, and if they are not doing so that could be a sign that the dogs have issues or are not good enough for breeding but the breeder doesn't want you to know. Do not take the breeder's word for it, ask for evidence and verify with the organization they claim certified the hips or elbows.

Another way for irresponsible breeders to cut corners is to place one or two "basic temperament" certificates on the dogs and no real advanced titles or significant training and claim that they are titled and ready for breeding. A "Canine Good Citizen" (CGC) certificate, "Herding Instinct" certificate (HIC) or the "Temperament Test" (TT) certificates are wonderful additions to a breeding dog but those titles alone do not make a dog worthy of being bred. Those "basic temperament titles" should not be all the dog achieves prior to breeding. Look for ADVANCED sport titles or working CERTIFICATES that prove the dog has been trained and tested appropriately for breed worthiness. Lastly, BOTH mother AND father should have their health clearances and should be able to be visited by you and your family to really experience they type of temperament they have.

There are always exceptions to everything, and there is in the case of reputable breeders as well. Use your instincts and judge fairly. There are breeders who have a great deal of knowledge and experience, and proof of quality is in the progeny their dogs have produced over the years and continue to produce. Many of these dogs have real world jobs as opposed to sport titles, so do your research and investigate!