



Puppy Buying Guide and how to avoid puppy farms

Buying a puppy is a long term commitment. It is important to take your time to research thoroughly before making a decision which will affect your life for many years to come. Research the breeds and mixes you think might be suitable before you make your final decision.

If you are interested in getting a Sprocker puppy please take a look at the document on the website titled "Is a Sprocker Right for You?"

Health

Reputable breeders aim to improve the overall health of the breed by only breeding from healthy good examples of the breed. The Sire and Dam of the litter are tested before the mating takes place and are only used if the results are acceptable. Health testing is expensive however by performing testing and then selectively breeding breeders can eliminate genetic conditions and minimise the likelihood of non genetic conditions occurring. It is very important to note that "Vet checked" does NOT mean health tested.

Hip Scoring is recommended for most breeds and the BVA Eye Scheme can detect many hereditary eye conditions. Genetic tests are available for many of the other known conditions and new tests are continually being developed. For further information regarding the appropriate health tests you can contact the Kennel Club or the relevant breed club.

Health testing does not guarantee quality nor that the puppy will not develop problems later in life. So many influences in the outside world can determine how your puppy will turn out. However you want to stack the cards in your favour and you can do this by buying from tested parents. The major advantage for health screening is that at least the breeder knows the stock they are breeding from is fit for the purpose and that any puppies resulting from that mating will be as healthy as they can be.

Sprocker Note: Just because a Sprocker is a Spaniel Cross from Cockers and Springers doesn't mean that breeding sires and dams shouldn't be tested. Ask the breeder questions about the parents pedigree and health testing

Reputable Breeders

One of the most important decisions you will make is choosing the breeder of your dog. Reputable breeders care about their breed, their dogs and those litters that they bring into the world. These breeders health test their dogs prior to breeding.

Check that the breeder will:

- Be contacted for any problems or moral support and reassurance.
- Take back a puppy or do all they can to aid in the responsible re homing of a pup that cannot be kept by the original purchaser.
- Be at home with the pups from birth to pups going to new homes, and have someone with them 24 hours a days in the first days and weeks.
- Begin the basics of socialisation to household life, people, other animals and also the beginnings of training.

Things to think about...

Always travel to see your prospective puppy in its home environment. Never ever meet 'halfway' at a motorway service station or in a pub car park.

It is important to view as many litters as you can before you make your selection. This will give you a clearer picture of what is normal and what is not. If you are not happy about any aspect when you visit a breeder then walk away.



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Always see the mother with her puppies as this will allow you to assess the temperament of the mother. Under supervision you should be allowed to see the whole litter and be able to handle them, rather than just seeing the puppy being offered to you. Observe the way the dogs respond to the owner and any other human family members. Be prepared to ask plenty of questions and to also be asked questions about yourself and your life style. Be wary of any breeder who does not give you a grilling, reputable breeders treat their dogs as members of their family and want to find the best possible homes for them.

We recommend that you request to see all written documentation of health checks. Documentation will be presented for inspection by any breeder whom carries out the checks. Breeders should be happy to explain anything that you do not understand about the test and/or the results.

Most importantly never buy a puppy because you feel sorry for it and want to get it out of an awful situation. Doing this just fuels the trade in poorly bred puppies, so no matter how hard it feels just walk away. That puppy will most likely cause you years of heartbreak not to mention the cost of the vets bills.

Some suggested questions to ask the breeder...

- Why did they choose to breed their bitch in the first place ? *Why did they decide to breed a litter of Sprockers?*
- Ask what the objective of breeding was, why the stud was chosen for example. A litter should be bred for a reason other than simply to produce puppies for sale.
- What activities do they do with their dogs? Most reputable breeders will compete in some way with their dogs, whether that is showing them or working them.
- If possible, ask for contact with a previous buyer from the breeder in order to see a pup from a previous litter.
- Ask what socialisation has been done eg. car rides, meeting people, busy places, vehicles, noises. A new owner should expect a pup to be able to slot into modern life.
- What back up does the breeder provide ? If there problems is the breeder willing to help either by phone or by visits ?
- Does the breeder want to stay in touch with pup ? If not then why not ?
- If there is major change in your circumstances will the breeder take the pup back or help with finding an alternative home?
- Do they provide advice regarding feeding. Will the new puppy come with some food and instructions about feeding?
- Will I get a certificate showing the worming dates for my puppy ?
- Ask to see evidence of all health tests.
- If I take my pup to my vets for a health check and my vet finds something wrong do I get a full refund on the puppy ?
- Will the pup come with 4 weeks insurance ?
- Will my puppy be tattooed or microchipped ?

Just because some of the answers do not come back as ideal doesn't mean don't buy the pup but at least you will have some feedback and knowledge on which to base your decision.

Know the breed...

Sprockers are from Cockers and Springers so Google search both breeds for more information about potential health issues, typical characteristics and exercise needs.



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Puppy Farming - some hard facts...

Puppy farming is a cruel and abhorrent trade by individuals who breed puppies in volume with little care or consideration for conditions or welfare of either the puppies or the bitches. Usually puppy farmers breed in volume but you will also come across back street breeders who have as little concern as volume breeders. In either case their main motivation is making as much money for as little outlay and efforts as possible.

Puppy farmers will:

- Breed over and again from their breeding bitches, damaging their health and will often kill or abandon them when they are 'no longer of use'
- Separate puppies from their mothers too early
- Ignore guidelines about the maximum frequency of litters
- Sell puppies at 'neutral' locations instead of from their own homes
- Keep the puppies in poor and unhealthy conditions
- Keep puppies in poor conditions where they have no access to day to day sights and sounds and fail to become properly socialised
- Fail to follow recommended breed specific health schemes
- Transport puppies away from where they were reared in unsuitable conditions
- Sell puppies through dealers, pet shops or other third parties whose only motive is making a quick profit

It is thought that as many as one in three puppy buyers may have bought from a puppy farm, going to outlets such as pet shops, the Internet and free ads, frequently used by puppy farmers.

More than half of puppy owners don't see the puppy in its breeding environment, receive a contract of sale, or health test certificates for the puppy's parents – all steps that the most responsible breeders will insist upon.

Where do puppy farmers sell their pups?

- They will often advertise their puppies on the Internet/via newspaper ads.
- They may sell direct from their breeding farm, and rely on the fact that once there people will feel the need to 'rescue' the puppy but more often than not they will do all they can to keep people away from the premises where the pups were born and bred.
- From pet shops
- Via middle men or dealers at neutral locations such as motorway service stations and pubs
- From the house of a dealer
- Directly from the Internet, where the pup is delivered straight to the buyer's door

Why does Puppy Farming continue?

The law does little to help prevent puppy farming. Every breeder who breeds five or more litters in a year will usually be required to obtain a breeding licence from their local authority. Local authorities are responsible for checking that the breeder's premises are adequate and that they are adhering to suitable welfare standards.

The quality of the checks Local Authorities carry out vary as many are under-resourced and officials may lack the necessary training to carry out this role. As a result too many breeders are continuing to breed without licences, as they slip under the radar or may have a licence despite conditions being totally inadequate.



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Cut out puppy farming by using some simple Dos and Don'ts

DO

- Thoroughly research the Breeder.
- See the puppy with the litter and the mother.
- Ask about the sire, ask to speak to the owner, better still see the sire
- See the puppy in its breeding environment and ask to look at the kennelling conditions if they were not raised within the breeder's house. If you suspect the conditions are not right, then do not buy the puppy.
- Ask to see the relevant health test certificates for the puppy's parents
- Be prepared to be put on a waiting list – a healthy puppy is well-worth waiting for.
- Ask if you can return the puppy if things don't work out. Responsible and reputable breeders will always say yes.
- Be suspicious of a breeder selling several different breeds, unless you are sure of their credentials.
- Consider alternatives to buying a puppy like getting a rescue dog or pup.
- Report your concerns to the relevant authority if you suspect the breeder is a puppy farmer

DON'T

- Buy a puppy from a pet shop.
- Pick your puppy up from a 'neutral location' such as a car park or motorway service station.
- Buy a puppy because you feel like you're rescuing it. You'll only be making space available for another poorly pup to fill and condemning further puppies to a miserable life

TELL the relevant authorities...

Local Councils, animal health officers and the police have a duty and the power to enforce the law. If you suspect somebody is a puppy farmer report them to the RSPCA, the police, or your Local Authority.