

# Golden Retriever Rescue of Wisconsin, Inc.

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**Backyard Breeder****GRRoW Hotline: 888-655-4753**

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## What is a Backyard Breeder??

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**BACKYARD BREEDER**, or **BYB**, is a term used often in the world of purebred dogs but one which is not easily defined, as there is a lot of 'gray area' in the world of breeding purebred dogs. Many, many, many 'real' breeders are not respectable, responsible, concerned breeders, but most people would hesitate to label them 'backyard breeders' either. Because of these difficult distinctions, I will provide an overall picture of a **RESPONSIBLE** breeder, contrasting that picture with that of an **IRRESPONSIBLE** breeder when necessary, and we'll leave the label 'backyard breeder' for those brave enough to use it!

To start, a **RESPONSIBLE** breeder breeds purebred dogs with the sincere desire to **IMPROVE THE BREED**. What does that mean? It means that the intent of each and every breeding is to produce dogs who are better (conformation, temperament, health) than the breed as a whole. To do this, excellent specimens of the breed are chosen, and matches are made in conscience and knowledge, rather than in heaven or by convenience! **IRRESPONSIBLE** breeders (backyard breeders and puppy mills!) breed for all the wrong reasons, such as..."our dog(s) is wonderful and will make wonderful puppies," "we want another dog just like ours," "selling puppies is an easy way to make some money," "it will be a good experience for the kids," "we paid \$500 for her and want to get it back out of her," "all female dogs should have at least one litter," "we can't afford to spay her (it was an accident)," "our breeder wanted us to breed her," "she comes from champion blood lines," "we have friends who want a dog just like ours," "she's AKC registered," "breeding will make my female less aggressive/hyper (which by the way is completely untrue, this breeding will just produce other aggressive or hyper dogs!)," and the list goes on and on....

In addition to the **REASON** for breeding, **RESPONSIBLE** breeders have some other shining characteristics as well;

- 1) They are literal 'libraries' when it comes to knowledge about their breed - you can rarely ask a question regarding breed standard, historical/ancestral background, genetic issues, temperament, or abilities of their breed that a good breeder can't answer in their sleep!
- 2) All of their breeding dogs (and their dogs' ancestors) are certified free of genetic diseases - in goldens that means OFA certification for healthy hips, elbows, hearts & thyroids, and CERF clearances for healthy eyes. Responsible breeders will also be able to talk knowledgeably about other health concerns such as allergies, epilepsy and panosteitis. They'll know how many dogs from their past breedings have had any health issues, and they'll share that information with you!
- 3) Their breeding dogs will not be under 2 years old or over 8 years old, and they won't breed any dog more than once a year or more than 4 times in her lifetime.
- 4) They won't have more than 1 or 2 litters per year at best, 3 or 4 at most - caring for a pregnant bitch and properly raising a litter of puppies is a full-time job that lasts at least 4 months if all goes well... you do the multiplication!
- 5) Their goldens will be indoor, family dogs (how else do they know that they're breeding 'good family dogs', goldens with 'golden' temperaments?!), and all litters will be raised indoors with the family (which is the **ONLY** way

to properly care for and socialize a litter of 'family dogs!'). Puppies **CAN NOT** be properly observed, cared for, and socialized in the garage or in a kennel area that is not an integral part of the home!

**6)** A good breeder's dogs will be healthy, well-groomed, proper sizes and weights, and active. They will be involved in one of more areas of dog-sport as a means of comparing and contrasting their dogs with others to ensure that they are breeding only truly excellent dogs in an effort to improve the breed! Their dogs' pedigrees will have titled dogs throughout, **INCLUDING** titles on the dogs being bred, and a good breeder will happily educate you on the different kinds of titles available to working/breeding-quality dogs! Just because you want a pet, doesn't mean it shouldn't come from capable, intelligent, beautiful, healthy, working lines! How else will you know that your new family member will be easily trained, responsive and willing?

**7)** Responsible breeders will be more interested in you than you are in them! Responsible breeders **MAKE SURE** that their puppies are going to live with prepared, responsible, caring new families. They'll ask you to fill out an informational application, they'll screen your application, ask for references, and may visit your home. They'll inundate you with information and education to be sure that you are as prepared for raising a golden companion as you can possibly be!

**8)** They'll provide a written contract that includes, at the very least, the following obligations: 1) Your obligation to return the dog to the breeder if for any reason at any time you can no longer care for the dog (whether it's 2 days or 15 years later!); 2) Your obligation to spay or neuter the dog (registration will usually not be provided to you until proof of spay/neuter is provided) if the dog is not sold on a Show Dog Contract that *requires* you to show the dog in competition (no litter produces ALL show dogs!!); and 3) The breeder's obligation to reimburse you for the cost of the dog if any defects in genetic health (hips, eyes, hearts, etc.) arise. (Watch for contracts that require you to return your beloved pet in order to receive a refund, this **SHOULD NOT** be the case - you should have the option of returning or keeping the dog and should receive a refund either way!!).

**9)** Responsible breeders will encourage you to seek out other breeders during your search for a puppy to be sure that you are making informed, well-rounded decisions. This is **NOT** a business for a good breeder, hence, they are not interested in making sure you 'buy' from them!! A good breeder's concern is the welfare of their puppies, and well-informed, concerned 'buyers' make the best homes!

**10)** A good breeder's whelping area will be well planned - well lit, warm, quiet but not isolated, and it will be immaculately clean! A good breeder will keep detailed records about puppies weights, health, and physical and social development, from the moment the puppies are born until the day they go to their new homes (each puppy will be individually marked with a colored ribbon or some other form of identification from the day of birth so the breeder can keep individual records for each puppy). Non-family visitors will NOT be invited into the whelping area until the puppies are at least 5 weeks old (good breeders know that early visits by strangers is VERY stressful for the bitch!), and at that time they should be asked to come directly from home, wearing clean clothing, and will likely be asked to remove their shoes and wash their hands and faces before entering the whelping area.

**11)** Responsible breeders will compare and contrast the puppies' temperaments, often including information gained from standardized puppy tests, and **THEY** will choose the puppy that is best for your family and your environment (rather than inviting you to come and pick your puppy based on emotions!). Their placement decisions will be based on their vast knowledge of the breed, their knowledge about each individual puppy, and the things they have learned about your family throughout the application process. Responsible breeders **WILL NOT** let the puppies go to their new homes before 8 or 9 weeks of age!!!

**12)** They'll insist on communication and follow-up before, during, and after you've adopted your new golden baby - making sure that all is well throughout the life of the puppy they've produced. They'll provide you with detailed information regarding feeding, grooming, vaccinations, and training, and will ask that you ask questions and provide feedback as you go along. Their door will **ALWAYS** be open to you and your dog!!

**13)** And finally, responsible, concerned breeders will be involved in breed rescue. They should be able to talk about their local breed rescue group knowledgeably, and should be able to direct you to learning more about rescued goldens as an option in finding a new family member. Concerned breeders are concerned enough about their breed, that they choose to be involved in rescue; helping unfortunate dogs find new, loving homes, helping to educate Backyard Breeders about responsible breeding practices, and helping to educate the public about

responsible pet ownership. If they don't rescue, they shouldn't breed... period! For more information on Golden Retriever rescue in Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota & North Dakota, please visit [www.ragom.org](http://www.ragom.org). In Wisconsin, visit [www.grow.org](http://www.grow.org). In other areas, please visit [www.grca.org](http://www.grca.org) and follow their rescue links to a rescue group in your area.

In comparison, **IRRESPONSIBLE** breeders usually fit few if any of the above definitions. While we usually think of 'backyard breeders' or even puppy mills when we consider a lack of the above concerns, there are many, many, many 'real' breeders (people who show their dogs, produce champions, and breed dogs) who fit few if any of the above definitions (they're often referred to as Show Mills) - often they started out with the right ideas, but politics and greed have created a new picture and their breeding practices have changed for the worst. Many champion goldens are **NOT** good representatives of the breed - while most conformation champions have correct conformation, there are many who have genetic health issues, temperament issues, and lack of working instincts. Many field champions, on the other hand, while having incredible hunting instincts and abilities, may have horrible conformation, non-golden temperaments, and genetic health issues. Unfortunately, these issues are completely ignored or swept under the rug by many breeders who insist on producing 'champions' without any concern for what they are truly doing to our breed!!! Beware of these breeders - they'll have a wonderful 'presentation', but if you ask questions and look for evidence (those things listed above) of responsible, ethical, concerned breeding and responsible, caring placement of puppies, you'll often find those things very lacking! The saddest thing about these breeders is that they DO have the knowledge to make good decisions, they simply choose not to use that knowledge. Don't misunderstand, there are many, many, many **GOOD** breeders producing champions too, but don't assume just because a breeder is producing champions that they're a responsible breeder doing everything they can to produce 'better' goldens - check **ALL** breeders out completely, ask **ALL** of the questions, and make informed decisions!!

Opposite from the 'Show Mill' breeders, most Backyard Breeders are nice people who simply don't know that they are breeding irresponsibly. They don't think about the fact that there are too many **POOR** representatives of the breed in the world already, and that it is, for the most part, the kind of breeding that they are doing that has created that problem. (Most people think it's ok if a golden doesn't look exactly like the standard, and maybe they're right, but what they don't think about is that the other important characteristics that separate good goldens from not-so-good goldens are things like genetic health and temperament). They don't think ahead to the fact that many of their puppies, or their puppies' puppies, or their puppies' puppies' puppies, will go to homes that are poorly prepared, irresponsible, or even abusive, and that those puppies will then end up tied to a chain alone in a backyard somewhere, turned into rescue, dropped at the humane society, left stray to starve to death, or euthanized for bad behavior that was the fault of their irresponsible owners. They don't realize that just because their dog 'seems' healthy doesn't mean it isn't carrying genes that could create devastating problems for the puppies they produce - causing physical, emotional, and financial pain to both the puppies and their families. They're not usually bad people, they've just not spent the time and effort to think and learn before they breed their dog. Organizations like Retrieve A Golden of Minnesota, Inc., other rescue organizations, as well as the local and national golden retriever clubs, make concerted efforts to help educate the public about pet overpopulation, responsible breeding, and the need to spay and neuter pets, but the task is a huge one, an expensive one, and a time-consuming one, and we haven't, unfortunately, reached everyone **YET** - however, that day will come!