

SO YOU WANT A GOLDEN RETRIEVER PUPPY?



Are you prepared to care for me for a lifetime?

Congratulations! Few things in life are more satisfying than giving a good home to a cuddly, loving and ravenous ball of joy—otherwise known as a puppy. But right now, before you start your search, a little research will go a long way to ensure that the puppy you take home is likely to be just the companion you hope it will be, and nothing less. That's what this section is intended to provide.

Who are we to advise you? We're Delaware Valley Golden Retriever Rescue, a volunteer run, non-profit organization of Golden Retriever devotees with one interest in mind: to further the breed we cherish. We realize that not everyone wants an adult dog, so we've prepared this checklist to help families choose a good Golden Retriever breeder and a good puppy.

Before you fall in love with the first adorable Golden face you see, take the time in an initial phone call to ask the questions listed here. You may not find a breeder who fits 100% of these criteria, but if you receive more than two negative responses, consider another breeder.

At the end of the list you will find questions to ask yourself. You should be able to answer all of them affirmatively before you begin your search.

Remember: You are adding a new member to your family for the next 10–15 years. **NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO BARGAIN HUNT!!** Prepare to spend \$800 to \$1,000 or more for a well bred puppy.

You may have known someone who has (or you may yourself have purchased) a “backyard” bred dog, a pet store or puppy mill dog and had great success. However, the growing incidence of serious problems in the breed makes it prudent to be on guard. Among the undesirable traits are temperament problems including aggression, shyness or hyperactivity. Hip dysplasia, elbow problems, eye problems causing early blindness, heart defects that can severely shorten life span and autoimmune disorders such as thyroid disease and cancer are also becoming prevalent. Responsible breeders do all they can to avoid these problems by researching pedigrees and screening parents for certain inherited problems before breeding. **CAUTION!** Pennsylvania is now the leading puppy mill state. Backyard breeders and dog “farmers” have found it more profitable to raise puppies than poultry.

Do not be in a hurry. If getting a Golden, any Golden, **RIGHT NOW**, is foremost in your plans, then you are not serious and will get what you ask for...just any Golden. You should read books on the breed and even attend dog shows or obedience trials to talk to Golden owners and breeders and **LEARN**.

Finally, breeders are expected to produce Golden to high standards. They are entitled to respect and courtesy from the people they are trying to please, so always be on time for any appointments and be honest in explaining your lifestyle, family activity level, experience with dogs, and knowledge of Golden Retrievers.

Keep this checklist by the phone when you make your calls. Good luck with your search for a quality puppy!!

1. Where did you find out about this breeder?

Responsible breeders will breed only when they have a waiting list of puppy buyers. They usually don't find it necessary to advertise in newspapers or with a sign out in the front yard. *The Golden Retriever Club of America (GRCA) maintains a national information line. Contact the GRCA at <http://www.grca.org/puppyreferrals.asp>.*

2. Do both parents (the sire and dam) have hip and elbow clearances from the OFA (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals) or PennHip? Ask to see the certificates. “My vet okayed the x-ray” is not a valid clearance.

3. Do both parents have current eye clearances? This must be performed every year. *Ask to see the certificates.*

4. Do both parents have a veterinarian's clearance, preferably with ultrasound by a canine cardiologist, on the hearts of both parents? Ask to see the certificates.

5. Are both parents at least 2 years old? OFA hip clearances **cannot** be obtained before that age. PennHip determines hip conditions at an earlier age. Elbow clearances can be obtained for dogs of any age.

6. How often is the dam bred? Breeding every heat cycle IS TOO OFTEN and may indicate that profit is the primary motive for the breeding.

7. Do all four grandparents, siblings of the parents and any other puppies that they may have produced have these clearances? A responsible breeder will keep track of these statistics and honestly discuss any problems that have occurred in the lines and what has been done to prevent them from recurring.

8. Are both parents free of allergies or epilepsy?

9. Is the breeder willing to provide you with references and telephone numbers of other people who have purchased puppies from him/her?

10. Will the puppy have a limited registration (which means if the dog is bred, the puppies cannot be AKC registered) with a mandatory spay/neuter contract? A breeder who cares enough about the breed to insist on these is probably a responsible breeder.

11. On what basis was the sire chosen? If the answer is “because he lives right down the street” or “because he is really sweet,” it may be that sufficient thought was not put into the breeding.

12. WILL THE BREEDER TAKE THE DOG BACK AT ANY TIME, FOR ANY REASON, IF YOU CANNOT KEEP IT?! This is the hallmark of responsible breeding (and the quickest, best way to make rescue obsolete).

13. Will the breeder be available for the life of the dog to answer any questions you might have? Is this someone you would feel comfortable asking any type of question?

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14. Is the breeder knowledgeable about the breed? Is he or she involved in competition with their dogs (field, obedience, or conformation)?

15. If the breeder advertises Champion lines (the initials CH, OTCH, CD, JH, WC before or after the names) do the titles go beyond the first two generations? The term “champion lines” means nothing if those titles are back three or more generations or there are only one or two in the whole pedigree.

16. Are the puppy’s sire and dam available for you to meet? If the sire is unavailable can you call his owners or people who have his puppies to ask about temperament or health problems? You should also be provided with pictures or videos.

17. Have the puppies been raised in the home—not in a kennel, barn or the back yard?

18. Is the breeder knowledgeable about raising puppies, critical neonatal periods, proper socialization techniques? Puppies that are raised without high exposure to gentle handling, human contact and a wide variety of noises and experiences OR are removed from their dam or littermates before at least 7 weeks may exhibit a wide variety of behavioral problems! Temperament, a genetic trait carried over from the parents, still needs development from the early beginnings of a puppy’s life. The breeder should provide extensive socialization and human interaction to the puppies in the litter.

19. Does the breeder provide a 3–5 generation pedigree, copies of all clearances, the guarantee, health records and material to help you with feeding, training and housebreaking?

20. Have the puppies’ temperaments been evaluated and can the breeder guide you to the puppy that will best suit your lifestyle? A very shy puppy will not do well in a noisy household with small children, just as a very dominant puppy won’t flourish in a sedate, senior citizen household. A caring breeder will know the puppies and be able to show you how to test them so that good matches can be made.

21. Do the puppies seem healthy, with no discharge from eyes or nose, no loose stools, no foul smelling ears? Are their coats soft, full and clean? Do they have plenty of energy when awake yet calm down easily when gently stroked?

22. Do the puppies have their first shots and have they been wormed? First vaccines usually are given at six, seven or eight weeks of age.

23. Does the breeder have only 1 or at most 2 breeds of dogs and only 1 litter at a time? If there are several breeds of dogs, chances are the breeder cannot devote the time it takes to become really knowledgeable about the breed. If there is more than one litter at a time, it is very difficult to give the puppies the attention they need and may indicate that the primary purpose for breeding is profit, rather than a sincere desire to sustain and improve the breed.

24. Does the breeder belong to the Golden Retriever Club of America and/or a local Golden Retriever club and has he/she signed a breeders’ “Code of Ethics”?

25. Do you feel comfortable with this person? Keep in mind that you are entering into a decade-long relationship.

If you feel intimidated or pressured, keep looking! It’s worth the effort. From all of us at DVGRR, good luck!

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Are you prepared to...

- Take full responsibility for a dog and all its needs for the next 10–15 years? This is NOT a task that can be left to children!
- Invest the considerable time, money and patience it takes to train the dog to be a good companion? (This does not happen by itself!!!)
- Always keep the dog safe; no running loose, riding in the back of an open pick-up truck or being chained outside?
- Make sure the dog gets enough attention and exercise? (Golden puppies need several hours of both, every day!)
- Live with shedding, retrieving, drooling and high activity for the next 10–15 years?
- Spend the money it takes to provide proper veterinary care including but certainly not limited to: vaccines, heartworm testing and preventative, spaying or neutering and annual check ups?
- Become educated about the proper care of the breed, correct training methods and how to groom? (There are many good books available. Invest the time to read a few.)
- Keep the breeder informed and up to date on the dog’s accomplishments and any problems that may arise?
- Take your questions to the breeder or other appropriate professional before they become problems that are out of hand?
- Have the patience to accept (and enjoy) the trials of Golden puppyhood (which can last for three or more years) and each stage afterward?
- Continue to accept responsibility for the dog despite inevitable life changes such as new babies, kids going off to school, moving or returning to work?
- Resist impulse buying and instead have the patience to make a responsible choice?

If you answered yes to ALL of the above, you are ready to start contacting breeders. Start early because most responsible breeders have a waiting list ranging from a few months to several years. Remember, the right puppy or adult dog IS worth waiting for!

A word about rescue dogs... Rescue dogs may or may not have been responsibly bred. However, since they are adults, we are able to evaluate them for any signs of a problem **before** you fall in love, something that can’t be done with a puppy. We consider this only one of the many advantages to adopting an older dog! If you think a puppy may not be right for you, and would like to be considered for an adult dog, please complete the adoption information in this booklet.