

## What You Should Expect From A Good Breeder

**Contracts:** Breeders should provide a companion puppy (non-show, non-breeding) sales contract that details certain responsibilities of both the buyer and the breeder. Be sure to read and discuss the contract before committing to buy the puppy, and don't sign anything that you don't intend to follow.

**Health Certifications (Clearances):** The Golden Retriever Club of America's Code of Ethics strongly recommends that all breeding dogs have examinations by appropriate veterinary specialists and certifications indicating that the dog does not have hip or elbow dysplasia, or heritable heart or eye diseases. It's wise to verify that the sire and dam have these certifications by asking for their registration numbers and using the QuickSearch feature at [www.offa.org](http://www.offa.org); For more information about heritable diseases, read [\*Health Screenings for the Parents of a Litter\*](#)

**More on Health:** No dog or line of dogs is genetically perfect, and conscientious breeders have investigated the health issues in their lines. Buyers should feel free to ask about any subjects of concern to them, and reputable breeders will voluntarily point out potential health risks (all lines have some). In fact, open disclosure of the line's negative information can be a mark of an honest, knowledgeable breeder.

**Guarantees:** No matter how carefully bred, risk of disease can never be zero. The best assurance of a healthy puppy lies in selection of the breeder, multiple generations of health certifications, and your preventive health care – and whether a specific health guarantee is offered in the contract is less important. Be wary of guarantees that require return of the dog before receiving compensation because ethical breeders don't want to take your dog away, but unscrupulous breeders know that they usually won't have to honor this kind of guarantee since most owners will not give up their dog.

**AKC Limited Registration:** Companion puppies are usually provided with Limited Registration, which means, among other things, that litters produced by that dog would not be eligible for AKC registration.

**Spay/Neuter Contracts:** It's often recommended that puppies be neutered (refers to both sexes) by about 6 months of age, but research is increasingly showing that there is a complex mix of health benefits and risks associated with early neutering (prior to 12 months of age) versus later neutering (over 12 months). It is suggested that buyers learn about the effects of early versus later neutering in Goldens [here](#) so that each can make an informed decision – and then follow-up by checking that the decision does not conflict with the breeder's contract.

**Co-Ownerships:** It's possible that a breeder might offer a co-ownership on a puppy, which is sometimes done if the breeder feels the puppy has potential for earning titles or for breeding. This is not usually recommended for owners who do not themselves have an interest in competition or breeding, because co-ownerships generally come with strings attached. While it is true that these connections often offer some benefits, they will also include obligations that may continue for several years.

**Lifetime Commitment:** Good breeders are committed to the puppy's well-being for its lifetime, and they can be wonderful ongoing resources to answer questions, provide useful advice, or help you connect with expert assistance when needed. Breeders appreciate a call when problems are minor so they can help owners avoid more major concerns, and they often have useful preventive health care tips that can save trips to the vet. Finding a knowledgeable breeder with whom you have good rapport and who wants to spend time teaching you about Golden Retrievers is almost as important as the selection of the litter, and such a breeder can be a valuable part of a support system if troubles arise. Finally, committed breeders remain available to assist in finding an appropriate placement for the dog at any time during its life if circumstances change and this becomes necessary.

## Questions to Ask Breeders

Are hip, elbow, eye, and heart certifications for both sire and dam verifiable at [www.offa.org](http://www.offa.org)?

- To verify, record Sire's Reg #
- Dam's Reg #

Are your puppies sold with a written contract? May I have a copy of it to review in advance?

Are you an active member of The Golden Retriever Club of America, your local Golden Retriever club, and/or other local dog club? Can you provide references from members of a local Golden club?

Are your puppies examined by a veterinarian before they go home? (Puppies should be examined by a veterinarian, who will typically provide a "New Puppy" pamphlet or exam form identified with the clinic name. Before the puppy is released to its new home, it is customary that the first set of puppy vaccinations will have been completed, that preliminary worming or negative stool check will have been done, that the vet will have examined the puppy thoroughly, and that any concerns discovered during the examination will be disclosed to the buyer.)

How do you socialize your puppies?

How many litters have you bred, and how many years have you been a breeder? How many litters do you typically have in a year?

Can I visit you and meet your dogs? (In nearly all cases, it's wise to make a personal visit because it can be difficult to tell the difference between a puppy mill and a reputable breeder based on a website.)

What is the general health and temperament of the sire, dam, and their first degree relatives (parents, siblings, and offspring)? Do/did any of them have any of the following symptoms or conditions (which can be hereditary or have a hereditary component)?

1. Temperament concerns (e.g., fearful, aggressive, timid, hyperactive, storm phobia, car sickness)?

2. Skin problems, allergies (itchy skin, runny eyes, frequent skin or ear infections, orange stains on toes from licking)?
3. Food allergy/sensitivity or frequent GI upset (needs special food, frequent loose stools)?
4. Epilepsy or seizures?
5. Lameness or stiffness (such as after exercise or upon waking)?
6. Pigmentary uveitis\* (red, watery, or painful eyes, glaucoma, blindness)?
7. Ichthyosis\* (flakey skin, greasy skin and coat)?
8. Prcd-PRA, PRA1, PRA2\* (night blindness, late onset blindness)?

\* For more information, see <https://www.grca.org/health/index.html>

## **Questions a Responsible Breeder Might Ask You**

A responsible breeder is committed to finding a forever home for each puppy and will ask questions to be sure the pup is a good match for your family. Below is a sampling.

- Are you aware that raising a puppy well takes about the same amount of time and energy in the beginning as caring for a 2-year-old toddler?
- Will someone be home with the puppy for much of the time during the first month?
- Have you owned a dog before? What breed? What pets do you currently have?
- What activities or lifestyle would you like to share with your dog?
- What activity/energy level do you want in a Golden Retriever – high, medium or low?
- Are you planning to crate your puppy when it cannot be supervised?
- How many children do you have at home? What are their ages? Are they comfortable around large dogs?
- Do you have a fenced yard?
- Do you plan to take puppy kindergarten and/or obedience classes?
- How do you plan to exercise your Golden each day?