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We have all heard it. Many groups advocate only rescuing and never purchasing a pet. This can actually be very harmful to the cause. Yes. I agree that puppy mills are awful and need to be shut down. I agree that a pet store should not be selling puppies under the false pretenses that they come from “breeders”. Even though I believe these things, I do not agree with the “adopt don’t shop” slogan. Let me explain.



Rescuers are the most amazing people in the dog world. They spend their nights and weekends transporting pets from dire conditions and lining up foster homes and shelters that have the space to take them. They spend hours screening adoption paperwork and interviewing potential owners for the pets in their care, trying to find the perfect home on the first try. We commend them for their efforts at saving these unwanted pets and changing their lives forever. This is not an article about you, you are heroes and I commend you immensely.

On the other side, how many of you personally know a dog breeder? Dog breeders spend hours checking bloodlines in order to decrease genetic abnormalities in their lineage. They look for a dog with the right personality for becoming a sire to future litters. They spend weekends driving across the country to dog shows to show their dog against other dogs of the same breed, trying to earn the title of best in breed, which means best genetic specimen. They have their dog's hips, elbows, and eyes screens for genetic abnormalities and if they exist, that dog is no longer considered for breeding. That dog is then either placed in a forever home, or kept as a pet with the breeder.

Before a litter is conceived countless thousands of dollars have been spent on these dogs. How about the amount of time invested in a litter of puppies. Breeders are there for the births, and if any complications arise they do not hesitate to intervene if necessary. Sometimes there are so many puppies that to ensure they all remain healthy a breeder will stay up all night rotating the pups onto mom for nursing so everyone gets an adequate meal. As the pups get old enough, the time comes to select homes for the puppies. Similar to how rescues search through adoption applications for the perfect dog, breeders are doing the same. Many make potential buyers sign paperwork ensuring if anything causes them to be unable to keep the dog, it will be returned to the breeder. Breeders also many times sell their puppies with a spay/neuter contract unless it is being sold for the purpose

of future showing/breeding. By the time a puppy is purchased, the price will never come close to the amount of time and hours invested in that puppy, but that isn't why people breed.

Breeders want to ensure the integrity of their breed, and also help make the breed even stronger. Many breeders even donate samples after a dog passes for genetic testing. They spend hours reading research and analyzing new treatments for their breed. They many times can tell a vet what kinds of anesthetic will be the safest, that certain food ingredients are known to trigger allergies, and a certain antibiotic could cause reactions. They know their breed many times more thoroughly than the veterinarian treating them.

Many breeders also rescue. They will take in a dog from a shelter that is not one of theirs, but one of their breed. They will do their best to find this dog a forever home while still carrying on the rest of their breeder duties.

For this breeders get attacked from groups like PETA and rescues saying they are the culprits for so many shelter dogs. People who adopt a wonderful pet from a breeder are treated like pond scum for not rescuing a dog instead. People associate breeders with puppy mills because the line has been blurred. When pet shops would tell people that their dogs came from breeders many people associate all breeders with puppy mills. Ever seen a truckload of puppies come in? Cages stacked on cages in the back of a semi with no air or heat, no water all different breeds? No breeder would allow that to happen to their dog.

When the slogan "adopt don't shop" is used, it is basically saying that the only dog worth having is a mixed breed. It is stating that pure breeds do not deserve to be loved. Breeders are not why shelters are full. Negligent owners are the reason shelters are full. Humans who have a dog but cannot afford to get it fixed or spayed, which leads to unwanted puppies. Humans who get a dog and find it not to fit into their lives anymore and choose to

get rid of it are the problem. I believe adopting and fostering is an important service, and it is why I have done both. I have also bought a pure bred dog from breeders. Those dogs came with contracts, they came under spay/neuter rules, and a lifetime return rider. If I for any reason could not have kept those dogs, they would have never gone to a shelter, they would have gone back to the breeder.



When I first adopted my current dog, she looked like a yellow lab pup. People would ask me where I got her, and as soon as I said my friend rescued the mom and raised the litter, they would all say “good. That’s how it should be.” No. No it shouldn’t. The mother should have been spayed. She should have never ended up wandering the streets without a home. I love my dog, but her situation should have never happened. If we did a better job at screening people who get dogs, these things wouldn’t happen. By this I mean through responsible breeding and rescuing. The slogan should never say ”adopt don’t shop”, it should be “Adopt and shop responsibly”. Pure bred dogs are not the villains. All my pure bred dogs were amazing companions to the rescue and foster dogs and cats I have helped along the way. My rottie helped raise a sick pitbull pup with severe separation anxiety, and my berner friended multiple fosters and rescues during his life.

Stop judging people because they bought a puppy when an older dog needs a home, because that puppy also needed a home. Stop judging the person who got a pure bred when a foster needs a home, they are not the ones who created the situation that placed dogs in a shelter. Maybe they tried to adopt from a shelter but the shelter decided they were not a suitable home even though they will be amazing dog parents. Many shelters have strict guidelines, and after being turned down by a shelter many people then decide to go through a breeder who has a different set of criteria they are looking for in a home for their pups. I personally have been turned down by rescues and shelters due to my lack of yard because I live in a condo, but every single one of my dogs has lived an amazing full life, never been left outside alone.

One of my biggest pet peeves is to tell breeders to stop breeding because the shelters are full, because that is not the answer. Shutting down non reputable breeders is the answer. This can be done by shopping smarter when looking for a pet, and enforcing more laws to ensure pets are taken care of better. Working to educate people where most pet shop dogs come from, making sure they are finding registered breeders instead of someone making a buck from the pair of dogs they bought. During Westminster this year I kept seeing on social media that we should watch the rescue show instead, and of course adopt don't shop. **Not one person represented at the Westminster show is responsible for the overflowing shelters and rescues in this country.**

Stop vilifying the people who spend more hours a day working to combat puppy mills and pet overpopulation then you will spend in an entire year. There needs to be balance, shelters and rescues need to work with breeders, not against them. It is us as consumers responsibility to adopt smarter. If going through a breeder, ask to see the facility your pup is coming from, ask detailed questions about the bloodlines and genetic guarantees. A good breeder will be happy to show you their kennel, answer



your questions, explain breed personalities, etc. My breeder let me come play with the litter of pups at 6 weeks even though I wasn't allowed to bring him home until 8 weeks. I sat in the room with 9 bernese mountain dog puppies for an hour. It was heaven. The room was clean, and organized, and the puppies were well socialized, and I met mom and dad and even a few cousins. She also showed me the entire bloodline back 9 generations. This is who you get a dog from if you want a pure bred dog. Not a guy who wants to meet at the supermarket and won't show you the parents, just pictures. Adopt and shop responsibly.

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