

# WOLFDOG BREEDING

## So, You Want to Become a Wolfdog Breeder?

By Cottonwood Kennels

Responsible breeders produce a litter of puppies only if those pups will improve or, at the very least, compliment the line. They carefully consider the animals, and the parents are chosen for such quality traits as health, temperament, background, conformation and training ability. Their only goal should be to make their line of animals better.

Quality wolfdog breeders will not randomly breed two animals simply because the female is in season, or to allow the breeding pair to experience the joys of parenthood, or because they want to make some extra money. And they will NEVER breed animals with undesirable traits (e.g., bad jaw alignment, bad temperament, genetic disorders, etc.) because they know that these traits will be passed on to the puppies as well.

Reputable wolfdog breeders will only breed when the parents are of an acceptable age for breeding. Although wolfdogs mature at around two years old, OFA testing usually occurs at approximately three years of age. (Note: Preliminary testing at two years old may be performed.) Responsible breeders will also breed only after the dam has recovered completely and they will not over breed.

Ethical wolfdog breeders are protective of their animals. If kept outside, the animals' enclosures will provide shade and be safe, secure, and sanitary. The animals will also be paired comfortably with other animals (e.g., three females

will not be placed with one male—all intact—as such a situation is usually done to produce a lot of puppies and not for the sake of the animal).

Responsible wolfdog breeders will have buyers lined up and will take deposits on puppies before the breeding takes place. Common litters are between four to six puppies, but litters of 10 are not unusual. If these breeders find they have more puppies than deposits, they are prepared to keep the remaining puppies until suitable homes are found.

If for any reason, a buyer is unable to keep his or her animal, ethical breeders will take responsibility for the animal by either taking it back or placing it or assisting its placement in another home. In such a situation, the breeders' obligation to refund the purchase fee is limited to the following: if the animal was recently purchased, suffers a verifiable hereditary/genetic disorder, or suffers a verifiable temperament/behavioral disorder.

Reputable wolfdog breeders will heavily screen potential buyers. They will determine if potential buyers live in an area where there are any restrictions, and if so, what their state or county requires. They will insist on meeting potential buyers in person (at least once) or have someone they know meet with them if distance is a problem. They will also require photos or videos of the buyer's facilities and/or will inspect or have an agent inspect them.

In return, these breeders will encourage their buyers to visit them and to meet the parents in order for both breeder and buyer to determine if a wolfdog puppy is suitable for the prospective human owner. (If, for any reason, breeders have any suspicions about a potential buyer, they are both probably better off not following through with the sale.)

If potential buyers pass the screening process and decide to interview other breeders, respectable breeders should refer them to other reputable breeders so that the buyers can be sure they are getting what they want and what they are told. One of the primary concerns for a reputable breeder is not the sale of his or her own puppy, but that a buyer—who has passed the screening processes—purchases a quality animal from a legitimate breeder.

Quality breeders will honestly answer basic questions about wolfdogs, explaining to the prospective buyer how to socialize, bond with, and properly feed and house their new puppy. Not only will the breeders provide positive information, but the negative as well; no breeder is perfect. This sharing of knowledge should not stop once the buyer leaves with the puppy. A devoted breeder will continue to be available for questions concerning the animal throughout the pup's lifetime.

Among the information responsible breeders will divulge is the importance of training, the benefits

of spaying and neutering (if the buyer is uninterested in breeding), and the seriousness of never leaving a small child alone or unsupervised with a large canine. (Note: Children being bit by the family dog has reached epidemic proportions. It is better to err on the side of caution than to make a small mistake that can have potentially fatal or life-long results.)

Responsible breeders will use and enforce contracts to be signed prior to the release of a pup. Their contracts should insist that buyers take the pups to their vets for health exams within "XX" hours of receiving the pup and should also provide a 72-hour contagious disease guarantee.

Reputable breeders generally offer a minimum 30-month hereditary defect guarantee (OFA will not even rate an animal until the age of two). For example, if the puppy should fall seriously ill or die from a genetic or hereditary defect, the breeder will provide a full refund, and/or pay the vet bills, and/or replace the puppy.

Ethical breeders should be able to provide verifiable pedigrees on each parent, with the names of the owners and of the animals in the lineage, and should also include photos, if possible. They will have researched their lines for any temperament or health problems and will only breed sound animals from sound lines. In addition, the pedigrees of the parents will compliment each other and should be traced back a minimum of three generations.

Reputable breeders should also be able to provide references from past buyers of their puppies and photographs of the offspring they have produced at their kennels. A good breeder's reputation will follow from past practices, just as the reputation of a bad breeder. Word of mouth is one of the best refer-

ences—both for good and bad breeders.

Responsible breeders are willing to provide their buyers with the names of their vets and will be able to provide accurate documentation that their animals are current on all vaccinations and wormings. They will be able to pay for all veterinary expenses, including pre-breeding vet checks, vaccinations, worming of internal parasites, heartworm tests and prevention, flea and tick prevention, etc.

In addition, responsible breeders assist in the whelping, if necessary, and are willing to pay for an emergency Caesarean-section should the need arise. While most wolfdog breeders do not yet incorporate OFA or PENN Hip certification for hip dysplasia and CERF eye testing into their breeding programs, there is a strong movement among some wolfdog breeders in this direction. Most responsible dog breeders test their animals' eyes and hips, among numerous other things, and some wolfdog owners and breeders are beginning to see the wisdom of such testing. It is a myth that wolfdogs are not prone to some of the same genetic disorders that plague many of the dog breeds.

Many breeders of high content wolfdogs pull their pups from the mother after ten days and begin a bottle-feeding regime that encourages bonding with humans. This supplemental feeding is done at two- to four-hour intervals around the clock. If the puppies are still nursing when they are sent home with their new owners, the breeders will either provide a mixture of the formula to the owner or give the owner the recipe of the exact ingredients so as not to shock the puppy's digestive system. The breeder should also show the buyer how to properly bottle feed and handle the pup during this time.

(Note: Many state laws mandate that no puppies be sold until the age of eight weeks.)

A responsible breeder will refuse ownership if the potential owner wants it as a guard dog; has small children and is unable or unwilling to supervise them at all times around the animal; does not have secure fencing/housing; refuses to answer or is vague when answering the breeders' questions; lives in a regulated area and would be in violation of any ordinances; cannot tell you what the following words mean: socialization, bonding, and submission. Obviously this person has not researched any type of canine behavior and is, therefore, a poor candidate for wolfdog ownership.

Reputable breeders will generally not make any money off breeding, nor is this their intent. Their selling prices usually cover medical costs and the care/healthy feeding of the nursing mother and pups. Any profits are put back into the animals by improving the kennels and the overall well-being of the animals. These breeders are NOT in the breeding business to make a quick buck and NEVER find such motivation an acceptable reason to breed.

There are many things to consider before deciding to breed. Most people do not think about the numerous expenses and responsibilities involved in breeding. We hope that this article has helped you to make an educated decision about breeding and/or about buying from a responsible breeder.



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