

Swiss Run Greater Swiss Mountain Dogs

What to Look For In a Breeder

Once you have decided the Greater Swiss Mountain Dog is right for you, it is important that you research where you are going to purchase your new puppy. Picking a reputable breeder is vital if you want the best chance of having a healthy puppy that is suited to your lifestyle.

One of the best indications of a breeder's quality is the questions they are **YOU**. It may seem insulting to some people, but breeders who want to know where their puppies are going are more likely to have bred them carefully. Often they will ask for a reference before they sell you a puppy, either from your veterinarian or a former breeder you have dealt with. They may ask you where you intend to keep the puppy (in the house or outside), what your work schedule is like, what you like to do in your free time, whether or not you have children, and how much land you have. Answer these questions honestly, because they may lead you to change your mind about the breed you want. If you have your heart set on a Swissy, but you and your significant other work 50 hours a week and like to watch TV on the weekends, this may not be the breed for you. A good breeder will realize this and most likely dissuade you from pursuing this purchase. Reputable breeders will often require new owners to sign contracts specifying that you will spay or neuter your new puppy, and also that if at any time during the life of the dog you wish to get rid of it you will return it to the breeder. Breeders who take these steps with perspective puppy owners are concerned about the welfare of the dogs they are breeding, and also about preserving the integrity of the breed in general.

There are some questions you can ask breeders to determine if they are a source from which you would like to purchase a puppy.

1. How old are the parents of the puppies, and did they have their hips, eyes, and other health clearances checked before they were bred? Waiting to breed dogs until they are at least two will lesson the chance that any undiagnosed behavior or health issues will surface. Checking the hips and elbows for hip and elbow dysplasia and the eyes for cataracts are a must, as these are conditions that are passed on to offspring.
2. How many litters a year does the breeder have, and how often does he or she breed each female? Breeders who have fewer litters are often able to spend more time with the puppies, and may be more aware of individual temperaments and how they will fit into your family. People who breed their dogs more frequently may be less concerned with creating quality puppies and more worried about making money.
3. Are there adults bred by that person on the premises that you can meet? What are their temperaments like? It is even better if you can meet the parents of the puppies, or any close relatives.

4. What other activities does the breeder participate in with his or her dogs? Do they do obedience, agility, or participate in therapy dog programs at local hospitals? Are they recognized by the American Kennel Club and/or organizations specific to the breed of dog you are searching for?
5. Can you contact people who have purchased dogs from them in the past?
6. Can we contact your veterinarian?
7. What vaccines have the puppies had?
8. Can you tour the kennel or area where the puppies are kept? Is it clean, and adequate for the number of dogs housed there?

Finally, trust your instincts. If the breeder refuses to let you meet the mother, and brings one puppy out to meet you, or if the kennel seems dirty or crowded, you would be advised to go elsewhere. You don't want to get the puppy because you feel bad for it. This will just encourage the breeder to keep breeding less than perfect dogs. The breeder of your puppy is someone who can be a resource to you throughout the life of your dog, and you want him or her to be a person you can trust.