

Crufts has been and gone for another year, however the RSPCA, amongst others have brought into question the over-breeding of pedigree dogs and the physical problems that may occur...

Canine Rescue Centres are very concerned about a loophole in the Dangerous Dog Act and have seen a rise in aggressive breeds overloading their sanctuaries. We also have many new breeds being introduced to the modern day family, firstly the Spanador (Spaniel crossed Labrador) for sale approximately 20 years ago, although their giddiness was sometimes a bit too much for the busy 20th Century family, hence they seemed to have decreased in popularity. The Labradoodle (Labrador crossed Poodle) can be found in most 'pets for sale' columns these days, whether it was a carefully selected cross breeding of two dogs or just a chance breeding, fortunately they are generally a very nice balanced breed. But beware... we now have the Yorkie Poo, Cocker Poo and Zuchoni!

I would not like to speculate if the cross-breeding of these two breeds was purposefully done for temperament, character or the well-being of such breeds. People are paying a lot of money for these cross-bred puppies without doing their research first - what would the character be like of two such breeds? Would their coat be difficult to manage? I have heard that the Shitzu cross breeds have incredibly high maintenance coats.

But what about the inheritance of behavioural problems?

Did you realise that the greater percentage of all canine behaviour is genetic. So that means if your dog chases after people on bikes which may not sound that serious, but try asking the person on the bike if he/she minds.

The chances are that your dog inherited that little habit from his mother or father. Or the aggressive dog in the park, the owner has tried and tried to socialise him to other dogs but he just hates them, barks and lunges at them as if he'd like to bite their heads off, you can be pretty well sure that the mother or father were not both laid back, calm and submissive parents.

As a canine behaviourist, I get asked to look at and advise on many dog problems. Anything from persistent roaming, not wanting to come back to the owner or maybe even biting the next door neighbour! More often than not with a little determination and a lot of hard work, unwanted behaviour can be modified and in a lot of cases completely cured.

Of course the same questions crop up time and time again.

- Why does my dog behave like this?
- Did we not socialise him/her enough as a puppy?
- Did we stop those training classes a bit too soon?
- Are we firm enough with him/her?

Who should we be looking at for a few answers?

Was the father/Sire as soft as a bun? Did Mother/Dam have a habit of nipping people's heels?

Of course there will always be conscientious breeders that have not only got their dogs hip scored, eye tested etc but looked long and hard at dog and bitch and thought, yes these dogs not only have fantastic looks but they also have good, laid back temperaments, let's breed from them, they will produce some fine puppies.

Unfortunately not all dog owners embarking on a litter of puppies are taking a long hard look at the bottom line... and that is... will they make a nice amenable family pet for someone? Or was this litter of pups purely produced on looks and looks alone?

My advice to you is be careful when choosing that new puppy; don't be afraid to ask questions, the reputable breeders won't mind. Remember it is a life time commitment, just ask these simple questions:

What were their reasons for breeding these puppies?

Can you meet the mother and father and see them integrating with other dogs, try and look out for any issues of aggression, possessiveness, nervousness or neurotic behaviour.

The chances are that if any of the following are



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spotted when viewing mum and dad your newly acquired little four-legged bundle of joy just might be following in his or her parents footsteps in approximately 18 months time.

Tricia Wills has been practicing as a Canine Behaviourist and has been taking care and socialising dogs of various breeds for over 20 years in the West Country for further details visit: www.triciawills.co.uk



TRICIA WILLS
QUALIFIED CANINE BEHAVIOURIST
EASTWOOD HOUSE
WESTWOOD LANE
LONGDOWN
EXETER
EX6 7RK
T: 01392 811723
M: 07932 743982