

## Evaluating A Breeder Website

### The Ins and Outs of Reading A Dog Breeder's Website

So, you are looking for a Dogue de Bordeaux puppy. There is nothing in the world that is more wrinkly and heart melting than a DDB puppy. You will find many websites loaded with beautiful pictures of adorable pups with all their little wrinkles. Stop for a moment and remember that puppy looks are fleeting and you are embarking on a purchase that will be part of your family for the next 6 to 12 years. Not all responsible breeders have websites, but many do maintain sites that feature their dogs and accomplishments. Therefore, beginning the search on the Internet for a Dogue de Bordeaux puppy can be a good first step in adding a DDB to your family. Unfortunately, however, many irresponsible breeders also take advantage of Internet technology to promote their dogs for sale.

If you find a website of interest, this could be the first step in your purchase and should be followed by emails, phone conversations, and personal meetings.

- ❖ **Red Flag-Be very wary of breeders who are willing to complete an entire transaction via their website without any personal contact.**

The Internet has made searching for a good breeder very different from a similar search 10 or 20 years ago, but the qualities that make a good, responsible breeder have not changed. Responsible breeders are devoted to their dogs and committed to the future of the breed. Not every responsible breeder is a technological wizard. Their passion is the Dogue de Bordeaux. The first rule in finding a breeder via the Internet is to look for substance over flash.

Here are some things that responsible breeders will feature on their website:

- ❖ Full Registered (AKC) names of their dogs.
- ❖ Full Health Certifications of their dogs or links to their testing.
- ❖ Working/Conformation titles.
- ❖ Pedigree or link to pedigree.

Every DDB bred in the United States should be registered with the American Kennel Club (AKC). For international breeders, dogs should be registered in the kennel club of their home country. Full registered names will allow you to verify information about the dogs via the many databases available online.

Example of registered names: Gothic Gardien's Bacchus; Phoenicians' Bouguereau.

Each dog should have information on his parents. A pedigree is a dog's family tree, usually either three or five generations. If it is not available on the breeder's website, the breeder should be able to provide it to you. Most pedigrees will list abbreviations for titles earned by a particular dog (CH = championship, GCH = Grand Champion for conformation titles, letters at the end of the name are working titles such as RN = Rally Novice, CD = Companion Dog; etc.); some will also list health clearances. In the spirit of "buyer beware," you should always verify claims about a particular dog. Also, keep in mind that statements, such as "championship lines," "championship pedigree," etc., really only have a bearing on the puppies produced if the dogs are in the first few generations (closest to the left); the further to the right you read in a pedigree, the more distant the relative and the less influence that dog will have on the genetic make-up of the puppy you are considering. A dog has a much more credible claim to "championship lines" if 50 percent or more of his first three generations of ancestors are champions as compared to a dog with one or two champions in his 4th or 5th generations.

- ❖ **Red Flag-Websites that list only the call names of their breeding stock may appear more "homey" but, in fact, this keeps you from doing your own verification of health and award claims.**
- ❖ **Red Flag-Breeder does not register dogs with the American Kennel Club (AKC) but instead uses a "knock-off" registry such as APRI (American Pet Registry), DRA (Dog Registry of America) or NAPR (North American Purebred Registry).**

### Health Clearances

Responsible breeders screen their breeding stock for genetic diseases. The Dogue de Bordeaux Society of America considers the following tests as necessary for all Dogues de Bordeaux (to receive their CHIC certification through OFA): hips (x-ray), elbows (x-ray), shoulder (x-ray), and hearts (cardiologist evaluated). Additional tests include CERF (eyes), thyroid (blood tests),

Vwd (blood test) and patellas (palpation). DNA Banking is also strongly encouraged. A responsible breeder will list the health screening they perform on their breeding stock and will either provide the information via a public database such as the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) or will provide prospective buyers with certificates of clearances upon request. One of the hallmarks of a responsible breeder is gathering as much information about their breeding stock as possible before planning a breeding.

- ❖ Minimum Health Certification for the Dogue de Bordeaux is: OFA Heart by Cardiologist, Penn Hip/OFA Hips, OFA Elbows and OFA Shoulders.
- ❖ Optional Health Certification for the DDB is: OFA Patellas (knees), Vwd (Blood test), CERF (eyes), Thyroid.
  - ❖ Red Flag-Breeder does not do any health checks on his breeding stock because "I've never had a problem with it before" or "They all run around the yard and nobody is limping so their hips are ok", or "They lay like a frog with their legs out behind them, if they had dysplasia, they couldn't do that" or the biggest lie of all "there are no health problems in the breed, they are a "rare" breed".

### **Titles (Conformation, Companion, Performance, or Working)**

Many responsible breeders are active in the sport of purebred dogs. Dogues de Bordeaux breeders, who are passionate about the breed, care about maintaining working instincts, evaluate their stock in the show ring, and showcase their dogs' unique talents through performance, companion, or events. Dogues can earn titles in obedience, rally, obedience, agility, tracking and draft work. They can also obtain certifications in search and rescue, therapy work, freestyle, and flyball. There is a DDB activity for every breed enthusiast. Breeder participation indicates they are spending time training their dogs and are actively in contact with the dog world, where they learn new things and stay current with advances in health, breeding, training, and husbandry.

- ❖ Red Flag-Breeder does not participate in any type of activity with his dogs and the dogs never leave the property.

### **Membership in a Dog Club**

As a general rule, responsible Dogue breeders belong to a regional Dogue club, the Parent Club or another Dogue Club. Many also belong to local all-breed clubs. Club memberships provide educational opportunities for breeders, as well as public education. A reputable breeder is willing to share information with others and also to learn from others; being part of a group devoted to the breed is a way to fulfill both.

- ❖ Red Flag-Breeder does not participate in any dog-related groups, clubs, or societies. Note: the American Kennel Club does NOT have individual members - they are a "club of clubs". Beware of a breeder who claims to be a "member" of the AKC.
- ❖ Breeder has been banned, expelled or suspended from a dog club or from AKC.

### **Number/Breeds of Dog**

Breeding a giant breed such as the DDB, is a labor of love. It is an expensive and time-consuming passion for a responsible breeder. Adult dogs require regular grooming, exercise, and training, and a litter of puppies requires around the clock care, often for weeks at a time. While it is possible for a breeder to be equally devoted to more than one breed, it is unusual for a good breeder to have sufficient time for more than two breeds.

- ❖ Red Flag- Breeder has more than three breeds actively producing puppies.
- ❖ Red Flag-Breeder has multiple females, all being bred to one or two "house" stud dogs. Females are bred during consecutive "seasons." Breeder advertises that puppies are "always available."