

## **Looking For A Cavalier King Charles Spaniel?**

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Your selection of a reputable breeder from whom to purchase your puppy is the most important step you can take in ensuring that you have a better chance of getting a healthy, temperamentally sound puppy and one who has a better than average chance of staying that way. Many dogs of all breeds are the result of irresponsible breeders and/or irresponsible puppy sales; therefore, we have compiled this brochure to help you avoid common mistakes when choosing a Cavalier breeder. In this brochure you will find questions to ask yourself. You should be able to answer all of them affirmatively before you begin your search.

Whether you are looking for a family companion or prospective show dog, and before you fall in love with the first adorable face you see, the information gleaned by asking the following questions will help you locate a Cavalier who is a good representative of the breed. You may not find a breeder who fits 100 percent of these criteria, but don't settle for anything less than one or two negative responses; none of the negative responses should be to the first four Questions to Ask the Breeder. Remember, you are adding a new member to your family for the next, 10 to 15 years. Now is not the time to bargain hunt!

Are you, as a buyer, part of the problem or part of the solution? If the dog-buying public purchased puppies only from breeders who are trying to do a good job of producing typical, emotionally and physically sound puppies that remain that way as adults, the bad breeders would stop breeding because they could not sell their produce. Instead, the public sustains and encourages these bad breeders by allowing impulse, convenience and price to dictate their choice.

You may have known someone who has, or you may yourself have purchased a "backyard" or pet store/puppy mill bred dog or a pup from a fair or flea market and had great success. However, the high number of serious inherited defects seen in all breeds of dogs today make this an unusual event which is unlikely to recur. Chief among these defects are temperament problems ranging from aggression to shyness to hyperactivity. Hip dysplasia, eye problems causing early blindness, heart defects that can severely shorten life span, patellar luxation (slipping kneecaps), back problems, epilepsy,

premature deafness and autoimmune disorders such as allergies, thyroid disease and cancer are also becoming prevalent. Responsible breeders will do all they can to avoid these problems by researching pedigrees and screening parents for certain inherited problems before breeding each litter.

Questioning breeders on health items should not anger them. They should provide you with written documentation of the testing they say they have done and should be pleased that you care about the future health of your puppy. If your heart is set on a less popular breed, like the Cavalier, you must be prepared for more difficulty in finding just the right puppy from a responsible breeder at exactly the time it is wanted. Comparing value for price, the show/performance breeder almost always provides the best puppy for the money, provided he/she can furnish adequate answers to the following questions and proof of testing for genetically transmitted health problems.

Beware of breeders who have only glowing recommendations for their dogs as there are always some cautions and peculiarities within each breed and no line is completely free of inherited health problems. The breeder should also question you. Some of the questions relating to your household situation, fencing, plans for children, career considerations, etc., may sound very personal at first but, because the best breeders provide a lifetime commitment to their dogs, they see no point in selling a dog into a situation that will only result in their having to take the dog back.

**CAUTION!** It is difficult to believe that any conscious person is unaware of the puppy mill problem, yet puppies continue to be sold through commercial outlets such as pet stores and multi-breed kennels. Puppy mills are no longer confined to the Midwest States - "farmers" in other states have found it more profitable to raise puppies than poultry. There are undoubtedly puppy mills in your state, too.

### **Designer Breeds**

The Cavalier, as a purebred dog, comes from generations and generations of breeding dogs with a common gene pool giving a characteristic appearance, temperament and function. "Cavashons" or "Cavapoos" are nothing more than mixed breed dogs. There is no guarantee that these dogs do not shed as they may indeed inherited the coat texture of the Cavalier rather than the Poodle or Bichon. If you must have a non-shedding breed, then BUY a non-shedding pure breed so that you know, with out a doubt, that this dog will not shed. If you want a mix breed, then go to a shelter and rescue one. You will have as much knowledge as to how this shelter dog will grow up as you will with a Cavashon or a Cavapoo and the added advantage to rescuing a shelter dog is that you will have saved the dog from being euthanized. CKCSC breeders are expected to demonstrate honesty, integrity and fairness in dealing with purchasers of puppies. Since there is no Cavashon or Cavapoo organizations with ethics guidelines, these boutique breeds are taking advantage of the general public by promising all sort of health and shedding guarantees when in fact there is no scientific research to back up their statements.

### **A PUPPY IS AN INVESTMENT**

There is no doubt that Cavaliers are one of the more expensive breeds. They are the Mercedes of the dog world. However, when you amortize the price of the puppy over 10-15 years, during which time this dog will have given your family so much love and enjoyment, the cost is minimal. How can you place a dollar amount on a Cavalier's many years of devotion to your family?

Veterinary care, training and owner supervision however will be the real financial burden over the years.

It is for this reason that purchasing a puppy from a reputable breeder is so important. Comparing value for price, the show breeders by far provide the best puppy for the money, provided they can furnish, in writing, proof of health testing on the Parents for genetically transmitted health problems. The high number of serious inherited defects seen in ALL dogs today makes this a pre-requisite before you purchase your puppy. You are paying a hefty sum of money for your puppy – at least get your money's worth and buy the best puppy you can find from the most reputable breeder. **NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO BARGAIN HUNT!**

However, not everyone wishes to or can afford to pay a large sum of money for a Cavalier. Everyone has financial burdens from time to time – that is just life. When people are faced with

an emergency, many use their credit cards. But buying a pet is NOT an emergency, despite the desperate pleas from your children. Most real breeders do not take plastic anyway.

The price of puppies of all breeds keeps going up and up. The cost of living index varies throughout the USA and breeders will charge accordingly. In addition, breeders are at the mercy of their veterinarians and the ever-increasing veterinary medical costs, if they are to breed for top quality, healthy, well-tempered puppies in mind. With some compromises on your part, there are ways of finding a wonderful companion Cavalier at a reasonable price.

Do not get caught in the “I just want a pet” as an excuse to purchase a puppy from someone other than a responsible breeder. Responsible breeders are trying to be sure that any Cavalier that they breed is a wonderful, well-adjusted, healthy companion – whether or not the puppy is destined for the conformation ring. Most litters do not have even one show-quality puppy so you can see that the vast majority of puppies are destined for life as a devoted companion. Do not short-change yourself into believing that “pets” are supposed to be inferior in expected quality of life to a dog that competes in conformation. If you decide to become involved in performance events such as obedience, agility, or rally, you want a pet that is physically and temperamentally capable of completing the tasks.

### **HOW TO FIND A CAVALIER PUPPY AND A RESPONSIBLE BREEDER**

When shopping for a home, it's about location, location, location. When shopping for a pup, it's about breeder, breeder, breeder! Dogs are living creatures that will hopefully be with us for 10 - 15 years. Therefore your choice of where to purchase your future family companion is extremely important, ranking right up there with the choice of your significant other or partner. It is well worth investing some time now to be sure you are working with a reputable, responsible breeder who breeds healthy, happy dogs.

### **How Do You Identify A Responsible Breeder?**

Good breeders do not breed to make money. They do not sell their puppies to the first person that shows up with cash in hand. They do not knowingly sell even one puppy to a pet shop, broker, or middle man for resale. Breeders who show and breed with concern for the Cavalier can pay thousands of dollars just to get a female pregnant, which does not take into account vet visits, puppy care and feeding, or any c-sections. When one considers that Cavaliers have an average litter of 3-4 puppies, the gain is not great. Review the topics listed below and look for a breeder who, at a minimum, does the following:

- Keeps dogs in the home as part of the family, not outside in kennel runs.
- Has adult dogs who appear happy and healthy, are excited to meet new people, and do not shy away from visitors.
- Shows you where the dogs spend most of their time, which should be a clean, well-maintained area.
- Encourages you to spend time with the puppy's parents (at a minimum, the puppy's mother) when you visit.
- Does not allow the puppy to leave its mother or the litter before 10 to 12 weeks of age, preferably.
- Only breeds one or two types of dogs and is knowledgeable about the desired characteristics of the breed, such as size, proportion, coat, color, and temperament.

- Has a strong relationship with a local veterinarian. Explains the puppy's medical history and what vaccinations your new puppy will need.
- Explains in detail the potential genetic problems inherent in Cavaliers and provides documentation through organizations such as the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) that the puppy's parents and grandparents have been tested to ensure that they are free of these genetic problems.
- Offers guidance for caring and training your puppy and is available for assistance after you take your puppy home.
- Is willing to provide references from other families who have purchased puppies if you ask.
- Feeds high quality, premium brand pet food.
- Does not always have puppies available.
- Is actively involved with local, state, and National clubs that specialize in the specific breed. Good breeders may compete with their dogs in conformation (which judge how closely dogs match their breed standard), obedience trials (which judge how well dogs perform specific sets of tasks on command), or tracking and agility trials.
- Encourages multiple visits and wants your entire family to meet the puppy.
- Provides you with a written agreement, contract, and/or health guarantee and allows plenty of time for you to read it thoroughly. In addition to these criteria, you will want a breeder who requires some things of you, too. The breeder will probably ask you to:
  - Explain why you want a dog.
  - Explain who in your family will be responsible for the puppy's daily care and attend training classes, where the dog will spend most of his/her time, and what rules have been decided upon for the puppy -- for example, whether or not the dog will be allowed on the furniture.
  - Provide a veterinary reference.
  - Provide proof from your landlord or condominium board that you are allowed to have a dog.
  - Sign a contract that you will spay or neuter the dog unless you will be actively involved in showing him/her. (Applies to show quality dogs only.)
  - Sign a contract stating that you will return the dog to the breeder should you be unable to keep the dog at any point in the dog's life.

If the breeder you are working with doesn't meet MOST of these minimum criteria - walk away. It cannot be stressed often enough: Do not be tempted, regardless of the circumstances, to purchase your puppy from an importer, a broker, a middle-man, or from pet shops. Most of those puppies come from mass breeding facilities better known as puppy mills. Another pitfall to avoid is a "backyard breeder" -- someone who breeds their dogs to make a little money or simply because they have dogs "with papers". Too often, the result of such practices includes puppies with poor health or temperament problems that may not be discovered until years later. In some cases, these problems can cost thousands of dollars to treat.

### **WHEN IS A GUARANTEE NOT A GUARANTEE?**

The first thing that must be understood and accepted is that the whole process of dog ownership is a gamble. Puppies are not perfect little machines, assembled from standardized parts. They are individual animals whose physical and behavioral traits are not immediately observable. Potentially crippling diseases may not create any symptoms until the animal is older – which is several months or years after you must make your decision about which puppy to take home. Therefore, in reality, there is no breeder who can categorically guarantee life or a quality of life.

Just like people cannot guarantee that their children will not be afflicted with a grave disease, breeders do not have a crystal ball to know what will happen with your puppy in the future. It

does not take a rocket scientist to understand that healthy parents are more likely to produce healthy offspring. So rather than worrying about which breeder offers the best guarantee, it is better to diligently locate a reputable breeder who health checks their breeding stock. Of course, health testing is not a guarantee in itself that your puppy will live a long, healthy life, but it certainly does help.

Many breeders have written agreements, contracts, and guarantees. Make sure the breeder you choose allows you plenty of time to read them thoroughly. If the breeder does not offer a guarantee and you feel more comfortable having one, write a short guarantee before you pick up the puppy and ask the breeder if she/he will agree to it. If it is reasonable, the breeder will likely not have a problem signing it.

Just keep one thing in mind. You could have the BEST-written guarantee in the world but if you cannot find the broker, importer, middleman or irresponsible breeder or get them to respond, how can you collect on your guarantee?

Health warranties that guarantee against "life threatening" genetic problems for a year are bogus. These slick breeders know that most genetic health issues will not turn up within a year. Requirements that frequently appear in guarantees are:

- Must return your puppy to receive a refund or another puppy. Now WHO would ever return their family companion after nurturing and loving this dog for so many months or years? Moreover, the irresponsible breeder is counting on that. This kind of guarantee is not a guarantee for you, the buyer, at all. It simply guarantees that the breeder will not have to replace the defective puppy.
- Must euthanize your puppy to receive a full refund or another puppy. This agreement usually has a time limit such as a year or two. Now, you are obviously not going to euthanize a pet for early-stage knee problems, hip dysplasia, or the heart problems that could occur at that early age. Certainly none of these issues would be severe enough at 2 years of age to do anything as drastic as euthanasia. Yet the cost of repair would be substantial.
- Requires all sorts of autopsies to be performed before offering another puppy or a refund. Autopsies are extremely expensive and there is no guarantee that any money or puppy would be forthcoming. At that point, it would be more cost effective and safer to seek out a different, more reputable, breeder and simply purchase another puppy that has a better chance of remaining healthy throughout his/her life.

**Terms that frequently appear in guarantees are:**

- Refund will not exceed the purchase price or 50% of the purchase price of the puppy. For example: If you purchase a puppy on the Internet for \$900 and your puppy comes up with patella luxation in both legs, you are looking at a \$3,000 surgery bill (approximately \$1,500 per leg). Depending on the guarantee, you are allowed at most \$900. More than likely, you are allowed \$450 (allowed 50% of the purchase price). In addition, that refund is further subject to what is said in the remainder of the guarantee -- such as whether the leg problem is considered due to trauma, what food the owner gives, gave a vitamin supplement required by the breeder, etc. As you can see, no refund is probably forthcoming.
- Receive a 50% discount on the next puppy if your dog comes up with a health problem within a specified amount of time. No responsible breeder would insist that you purchase another dog, even at half price, to resolve a health issue on the first dog. If a guarantee sounds too good to be true, it usually is. Read the small print carefully. If you really have to have a guarantee, then it should say that if any genetic problems do arise, the breeder will either

refund the purchase price, replace the puppy with another of similar quality or (since they know you are not going to return a pet that is now a member of your family) help with the costs of treatment. There should also be a time limit on this – no breeder should be required to produce a life guarantee on a dog.

### **Questions to ask yourself**

Are you prepared to.....

- Take full responsibility for this dog and all its needs for the next 10 to 15 years? This is NOT a task that can be left to children!
- Invest the considerable time, money and patience it takes to train the dog to be a good companion? (This does not happen by itself!!!!)
- Always keep the dog safe; no running loose, riding in the back of an open pickup truck or being chained outside?
- Make sure the dog gets enough attention and exercise?
- Live with shedding for the next 10 to 15 years?
- Spend the money it takes to provide proper veterinary care including, but certainly not limited to: vaccines, heartworm testing and prevention, spaying or neutering and annual checkups?
- Become educated about the proper care of the breed, correct training methods and how to groom?
- Keep the breeder informed and up to date on the dog's accomplishments and problems?
- Take your questions to the breeder or other appropriate professional before they become problems out of hand?
- Have the patience to accept (and enjoy) the trials of Cavalier puppyhood and each stage afterwards? Continue to accept responsibility for the dog despite your inevitable life changes such as new babies, kids going off to school, moving or returning to work?
- Accept responsibility for the dogs' inevitable changes due to old age and/or ill health?
- Resist impulse buying and instead have the patience to make a responsible choice?

If you answered YES to ALL of the above, you are ready to start contacting breeders. Start early because most responsible breeders have a waiting list ranging from a few months to a couple of years.

Remember, the right puppy IS worth waiting for!!

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK THE BREEDER**

1. Do both parents (sire and dam) have a hip clearance from the OFA (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals)? Ask for copies of the certificates. "My vet okayed the x-ray" is not a valid clearance. Final hip clearances cannot be obtained until dogs are two years of age; however, preliminary OVA hip clearances can be obtained at any age and should be done if either parent is under two years.
2. Do both parents have current -- current means dated within 12 months prior to breeding -- eye clearances from CERF (Canine Eye Registration Foundation)? Ask for copies of the certificates.
3. Do both parents have current -- current means dated within 12 months prior to breeding -- veterinarian's clearance, preferably by a canine cardiologist, for Heart disease? Have both parents' hearts been examined by ultrasound or color doppler? Ask for copies of the certificates.

Regional Cavalier Clubs routinely sponsor heart clinics with a cardiologist at minimal cost. Ultrasound/Doppler machines are not always easily available for all breeders throughout the USA.

4. Do both parents have current -- current means dated within 12 months prior to breeding -- veterinarian's clearances for patellar luxation (slipping knee caps)? Ask for copies of a veterinarian's written statement or an OFA patellar certification.

5. Will the puppy have a restricted (non-breeding) registration with strong recommendation to spay/neuter? This is a good indication of a responsible breeder.

6. Will the breeder gladly take the dog back at any time, for any reason, if you cannot keep it?! This is the hallmark of responsible breeding (and the quickest way to make rescue obsolete).

7. Is the breeder involved in competition with their dogs (conformation and/or obedience)? The breeder should be a member of the CKCSC, USA. This gives him/her access to others in the breed, makes him/her privy to discussions regarding health and temperament concerns, and allows him/her to become familiar with different bloodlines from which he/she might choose prospective breeding stock. It also indicates more than just a passing interest in Cavaliers.

8. Are there at least three titled dogs (the initials CH, OTCH, CD, CDX, UD....before or after the names) in the first three generations of the puppy's pedigree? The term "championship lines" means nothing if those titles are infrequent or back four or more generations.

9. Are the puppy's sire and dam available for you to meet? If the sire is unavailable, can you call his owners or people who have his puppies to ask about temperament or health problems? You should also be provided with photos or videos if you cannot see them in person.

10. Have the puppies been raised in the home, kennel, barn or backyard? Puppies that are raised without high exposure to human contact and a wide variety of noises and experiences OR are removed from their dam or littermates before at least eight weeks, may exhibit a wide variety of behavioral problems!

11. Have the puppies' temperaments been evaluated and can the breeder guide you to the puppy that will best suit your lifestyle? A caring breeder will know the puppies' temperaments and will be able to guide you to the puppy best suited for your family. That breeder will also realize that temperament is highly inherited and make good temperament a part of their breeding philosophy.

12. Does the breeder have only one, or at most two, breeds of dogs? If there are several breeds of dogs, chances are the breeder cannot devote the time it takes to become really knowledgeable about each breed.

13. Do the puppies seem healthy, with no discharge from the eyes or nose, no loose stools, no foul smelling ears? Are their coats soft, full and clean? Do they have plenty of energy when awake yet calm down easily when gently stroked? All this will be self-evident if you manage to see the litter.

14. Do the puppies have their first shots and have they been wormed or checked clear of worms?

15. Does the breeder provide you with the following, as required by the CKCSC,USA Code of Ethics: a three to five generation pedigree; a recent veterinarian signed health certificate for the puppy; written medical records for the puppy, to include date(s) of immunizations and wormings; material to help you with feeding, training and housebreaking; a CKCSC,USA New Membership Application form; a CKCSC,USA Transfer of Ownership form; and a copy of the CKCSC,USA Code of Ethics?

16. Is the breeder a member in good standing with the CKCSC,USA, which has a Code of Ethics that member/ breeders have to abide by? Does the breeder register all his/her litters with the CKCSC,USA as required by the Code of Ethics? Due to the fact that the CKCSC, USA has been the main registration organization for the past 40 years in the USA and that breeders who do not abide by the stringent Code of Ethics are refused membership AND registration privileges, it would be to your advantage to require CKCSC, USA registration papers.

17. Will the breeder be available to answer any questions you might have for the life of the dog? Do you feel comfortable with this person? Are you feeling intimidated or pressured? If so, keep looking! You are entering into a decade long relationship and you need to have a good rapport with the breeder for future queries.