

Why pay more for a Pet Puppy?

The \$850.00 Puppy versus The \$350.00 (or less) Puppy

Breeding

\$850.00 - Both the sire and dam of this puppy came from top quality breeding stock which was developed over years and years of selective and knowledgeable breeding. Both meet the requirement of the written AKC and ASCA standard for the breed in conformation as well as temperament. Each has a pedigree, which has been studied and thoroughly researched. These dogs have been selected to breed to each other because they can both contribute to the excellence of the breed as well as complement one another. They are not just bred to each other because the breeder owns them and in all likelihood the sire may be from another kennel and has been used at a stud fee in the hundreds or thousands of dollars.

\$350.00 - The dam of this litter was purchased from a local pet store and originally came from a Missouri puppy mill. She was sick off and on the first year of her life due to too many different types of intestinal parasites and malnutrition. The sire, an over-sized male, lives down the street and was purchased from an ad in the newspaper. Neither owner has ever heard of the AKC or ASCA written standard. Neither owner has seen a written pedigree. The female is skittish and snappy. Her owners hope that having a litter will calm her down. No respect is given to their suitability to each other; they are simply bred because they were bought for the sole intention of making money from litters.

Genetics

\$850.00 - Before this breeding ever took place, both male and female had test including hip X-Rays (OFA), eye tests (CERF), DNA, and a multitude of other tests to determine that there were no physical or genetic problems that might be passed on to offspring. The breeder is well aware of the genetic problems to which the breed is predisposed and uses no animal for breeding unless it is certified clear of defects by a qualified Veterinarian. The health of her pups is guaranteed by a written warranty as well as a health guarantee covering contagious diseases or congenital disorders. The puppies of the resulting litter are also examined for underlying genetic or congenital disorders before going to their new forever homes.

\$350.00 - The breeder is totally unaware of the genetic problems within the breed. Trips to the Veterinarian, except for dire emergencies or yearly shots, are considered too expensive. The breeders' hope is to make money off the sale of the puppies. If he keeps expenses down, he can buy that new couch he's been wanting. Puppies are sold with no guarantee.

Birth, Socialization & Care

\$850.00 - The breeder is a professional and he has a good reputation to maintain. His goal is to produce beautiful and sound specimens, which anyone would be proud to own. Profit, if any is made, goes toward future breedings, always aimed toward the betterment of the breed, or for show entries, handler's fees, new equipment and important veterinary tests. Both the mother and pups are fed the highest quality diet. Many trips to the vet

assure him that mother and pups are thriving under the very best care. The litter is born with the breeder present. The pups are raised in a busy part of the house where they are socialized, groomed and exposed to different kinds of stimuli. They are touched and talked to, cuddled and even sung to. They are never sold before they are seven weeks old because the breeder knows how important to puppy development and socialization weeks 6-8 or 9 are to the puppy. Every buyer is interviewed at length and pups are placed only in homes where they will receive the finest treatment. The breeder spends time with each new owner, educating and answering questions. Follow-up calls are made to make sure the pups are adjusting well. Each new owner receives a bill of sale and health guarantees, vaccination record, minimum five-generation pedigree, guarantee of registration with the AKC and ASCA and thorough puppy care and nutrition information. If the puppy is not considered to be of such quality as it will better the breed the puppy is sold with a limited registration or non-breeding agreements. The new owners are encouraged to continue a relationship with the breeder, and to call and ask questions at any time during the dog's life.

\$350.00 - These puppies are born in a box, in the garage and receive little care other than what the mother gives. It is likely the bitch gave birth with no one present. To cut costs they are weaned on generic dog food and allowed to nurse on the mother as long as possible to keep food bills down. The bitch's health declines rapidly due to poor health and repeated breeding and some pups are weak and runty. They are sold as quickly as possible because advertising and vaccines are expensive. They are sold without having had their dewclaws removed, without shots, parasite checks, vet examinations, guarantees or information of any kind. They are sold to anyone who has the cash. If the new owner is lucky he may receive an AKC or ASCA registration application. Although the puppy is of very poor quality, it is sold with full breeding rights. The new owner usually disappears with the pup, never to be seen again. If the market is not good, the breeder takes the leftover pups to the local pet shop. And because this breeder never hears any bad report from their buyers (who wouldn't call anyway after they learn they did not buy from a reputable breeder) and thus continue doing what they think "works."

Prospective Owners and Pre-screening

\$850.00 – The breeder carefully screens prospective owners of their puppies with reference checks, interviews, and lengthy questionnaires. They are careful to give consideration to whether the prospective buyer is the right fit for their breed with regard to their lifestyle, their living arrangements, and their time commitment to a new puppy. They will want to ensure proper training for their puppy in the care of its new forever owners. They will have a first right of refusal clause in their contract to ensure that their puppies are not passed off to "Aunt Sue at the farm" or the pound or shelter. The breeder has carefully planned this litter for years and is therefore expectantly waiting the arrival so he/she can pick their newest addition to their kennel. The puppies are carefully examined over the development stages for the right addition based on breed standard. The prospective owners WILL NOT get pick of the litter or be able to 'pick' a puppy from the litter...there will be very careful thought given to where each puppy will be placed based on the breeder's temperament testing done at 7-8 weeks of age, the puppy's place in the pack, the puppy's future 'job' inclination, as well as what the prospective owners hope to accomplish with the puppy. Puppies who are inclined to herding are not suited for homes with elderly or with very young children unless it is an experienced home, for instance.

\$350.00 – The breeder of these pups gives first pick to whomever shows up with cash first. Prospective buyers are given carte blanche to picking their forever pet(or not so forever in most cases like this because the prospective owner is ill equipped in puppy selection and is given no guidance from the breeder.) They generally pick the puppy based on coloration of eyes or fur instead of temperament and personality. The breeder of these pups hopes to

never hear from the buyer again for fear of reprisal in poor puppy selection techniques. The breeders don't spend enough time with the puppies in all likelihood to know about temperament or personality let alone temperament testing.

The comparison you have just read is hypothetical, but very typical of what we see all too often. Although not every breeder who charges higher prices is reputable and ethical, pet buyers should keep looking until they find one that is. When I am asked why my prices are so much higher than those in some newspaper ads, I email a copy of this article. Those buyers who respect the quality and excellence are wonderful customers and become "partners" in this hobby that I love so much. Those that are seeking pets deserve nothing less than a nice quality, healthy and trusting animal. As well as a breeder they can count on.

Responsible breeding is not a business. Most good breeders lose money on their litters. As an idea and an example, a breeder of a litter of 6 Australian Shepherds pups may have paid:

- \$150.00 for an OFA screening and evaluation
- \$30.00 for the yearly CERF screen
- \$80.00 for a thyroid test
- \$80.00 for a cardiac exam
- \$85.00 for a brucellosis screening and pre-breeding exam
- \$500.00 to \$1200 for a stud fee
- \$600.00 to \$800.00 for shipping the bitch to and from the stud and boarding the bitch
- \$2100.00 for pre-whelping vet visits
- \$200.00 for extra food and supplements during and after the bitch's pregnancy
- \$175.00 for a whelping box
- \$50.00 for needed supplies for the delivery
- \$240.00 for 2 days minimum off-work for puppy delivery and care
- \$50.00 for an after-birth checkup
- \$300.00 for puppy food
- \$300.00 for puppy checkups, shots and de-wormings
- \$320.00 to register the litter with AKC and \$18 to register the litter with ASCA
- \$100.00 for miscellaneous puppy supplies

Thus, at a minimum, the breeder has spent well over \$3000.00 on this litter. This doesn't count any medical emergencies, such as a caesarian delivery. It also doesn't count all the fees for performance activities, such as conformation showing and obedience trials, which responsible breeders engage in to prove that their dogs are breed-worthy. This can easily cost several thousand dollars.

Anonymous