

## **TIBETAN MASTIFF BUYER'S GUIDE**

### **RESEARCH**

If you are here you have started out on the right foot.

Before you contact a breeder make sure that the Tibetan Mastiff is right for you.  
Read about the breed and the requirements to keep this type dog safe, healthy and happy.

**Read the articles** on the Tibetan Mastiff Information website <http://www.tibetanmastiffinfo.com/articles/Whys-Wherefores-The-Tibetan-Mastiff.shtml>

**Visit breeder websites** and read their information about the Tibetan Mastiff.

**Join Facebook groups.** Here are some:

Tibetan Mastiff Health Alliance <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TM.HealthAlliance/>

Tibetan Mastiff Types and Subtypes Open <https://www.facebook.com/groups/291630377709451/>

Tibetan Mastiff Hard Work Effects <https://www.facebook.com/groups/170455703153630/>

You can **take SnowSpirits TM Compatibility Survey** at

[http://www.snowspiritstibetanmastiffs.com/TIBETAN\\_MASTIFF\\_COMPATIBILITY\\_%20SURVEY.pdf](http://www.snowspiritstibetanmastiffs.com/TIBETAN_MASTIFF_COMPATIBILITY_%20SURVEY.pdf)

### **BREEDER PRACTICES**

There are as many different practices as there are breeders. SnowSpirits believes the best breeders:

- A. **Test their breeding pairs for genetically inherited health issues.** There are four tests recommended for Tibetan Mastiffs. You can find the list here <http://www.caninehealthinfo.org/brdreqs.html?breed=TM>  
Ask for documentation. Some breeders will provide you with copies of results. Ask to be able to speak with the Veterinarian who completed the tests. Other Breeders have their results listed on Orthopedic Foundation for Animals website. <http://www.offa.org>
- B. **Provide a contract.** We suggest that it contains language that specifies the breeder and the buyer responsibility. SnowSpirits recommends that you ***do not*** accept a contract that requires you to breed your dog or allows the breeder to breed your dog. These practices often result in poor outcomes for the buyer, the dog and the breed. Breeders often require a non-refundable deposit on a puppy. Make sure you get to review the contract and agree to it before you make a deposit.
- C. **Promises in writing to take back the dog or assist with rehoming the dog if you are no longer able to keep the dog.**
- D. **Provide a health guarantee** Not to be confused with a guarantee that your puppy will be not be afflicted with a health problem, inherited or not. Both breeder and buyer take a risk that any single dog may have a health issue, however if the breeder has done their very best not to breed a dog with a health problem and you have followed their guidelines for diet and exercise, they should be willing to refund a portion of the purchase price to assist with medical expenses if a puppy does have a genetically inherited health problem.

- E. **Registers Parents with a well-established pedigree registry.** Such as American Kennel Club, United Kennel Club, Canadian Kennel Club, FCI member clubs. Unfortunately this does not ensure you are getting a full blood Tibetan Mastiff, it does make more likely that you are. Don't pay thousands of dollars (or even hundreds) for a mixed breed dog.
- F. **Promises to give you lifetime support** Advertises that they will be available to you for questions and concerns for the life of the dog. Breeders who make this promise often ask for regular updates.

## **FINDING A BREEDER**

The best places to find a breeder is through their websites. Although some breeders do post on puppy finding websites, these are generally commercial breeders who do not complete all the health testing and use the other practices listed above. If you are determined to have a Tibetan Mastiff right away and are willing to take the risk, I would recommend that be your last resort.

- A. **Tibetan Mastiff Info lists upcoming litters and puppies.** They give a "Stamp of Excellence", which states the breeder has met their requirements. They do require the documentation to receive the stamp. They DO NOT require eye testing or thyroid testing for this "Stamp of Excellence".  
<http://www.tibetanmastiffinfo.com/breeders/Puppies-Tibetan-Mastiff-Info.shtml>
- B. **Do an online search using "Tibetan Mastiff Breeder" or "Tibetan Mastiff Breeders".** If you use "Tibetan Mastiff Puppies" you are likely to get more hits for puppy finding sites.
- C. **Dig deep.** Look beyond the first few pages of listings. You may find exactly the breeder you are looking for.
- D. **The AKC parent club does not have listing of recommended breeders.** Most parent clubs do. American Tibetan Mastiff Association has a page for this, but there are no breeders listed. If a breeder tells you that they are recommended by the parent club, verify it on this page. <http://www.tibetanmastiff.org/breeder-referral.html>
- E. **Look for Basic information** Even if websites are not large, health testing completed for the breeding pairs, basic practices, pedigrees or links to pedigrees and what a buyer can expect from them should be stated. If a breeder is not willing to share their practices and health testing publically than they are likely not to find these of importance or be willing to share them privately.
- F. **Make a list of breeders who meet your priorities or come close.** Sometimes you can negotiate these expectations. For example if the breeder meets all of the expectations except for eye testing for the mother and father, request these be completed and shared with you before you agree to buy a puppy from them. Other items like putting in writing that they will take back or assist with rehoming a dog are probably less negotiable, but it never hurts to ask.
- G. **It never hurts to do an online search for the breeder by name.** While some dog breeders can be nasty with each other and make untrue accusations, if you find more than one instances of alleged or proven unethical or illegal actions consider another breeder. Expect that breeders will also do an online search for your history as well.

## **CONTACTING A BREEDER**

The best breeders are busy people. Find out as much as you can about the breeder from their website and make a thoughtful list of questions that you have. Also know that they are concerned with not only breeding healthy puppies, but where their puppies have homes. You will be interviewed. If you are not interviewed, this may be cause for concern.

- A. **Go to the breeder's website and see if they have an online puppy buyer questionnaire.** Fill this out and wait to be contacted. If the breeder goes beyond a few days in acknowledging they have received your questionnaire, send them a quick email to confirm they have it. If you do not hear from them after this, take them off your list.
- B. **Expect to answer any questions the breeder has.**
- C. **Expect to get answers to your questions.**
- D. **Before you make a deposit get a copy of the contract to review.** Do not make a deposit without agreeing to the final contract language. Keep records regarding any conversations you have (emails). Sometimes it is easy to forget exactly what was agreed to.

## **MAKING THE PURCHASE.....BUYER BEWARE**

These are "red flags" that the breeder may not be ethical or is not sharing all the information

- A. **Refuses to share basic information**..... Pedigree information, health information, or photos until you provide a deposit. This kind of information is basic and should be made available to all. If you send a deposit you may not get your money back or a puppy or find yourself in any number of unpleasant circumstances.
- B. **Temperament is just as important as health in a breeding pair** If the breeder does not describe the mother and father's temperament by specifically describing how they behave in a variety of circumstances, question them further. If they will only answer in term of "typical TM temperament" this can mean a variety of temperaments common to the TM. Not all of them are good or may not be compatible with your lifestyle.
- C. **If the breeder uses excessive "selling language"** Be cautious if most of the language the breeder uses is that of a salesperson, both on their website and in their conversations with you. "From champion bloodlines", "Superior Dogs" "Healthy Dogs" "Premier", "from OFA lines" and similar statements might be backed up by fact, but the facts may be meaningless. While most breeders will use some selling language to grab your attention, they should be able to tell you what they mean by "reputable breeder" or "responsible breeder". If the answers to most of your questions are nonspecific or non-descriptive, or the breeder makes excuses or has reasons for not health testing and all the conversations end in the breeder trying to sell you a puppy, you may not get what you wanted in a puppy. While breeders should brag about their dog's accomplishments and beauty, they should be giving facts. If there is more "selling language" than fact on their website, you may want to ask more questions.
- D. **IS IT A TIBETAN MASTIFF?** The Tibetan Mastiff was founded with breeding stock from the Himalaya Mountain regions of Tibet, Nepal and India. These were dogs working as either guardians of the nomadic herders or

stationary guardians of the cities. One lighter more agile, the other a little heavier. Descriptions and Breed Standards are based on these dogs. This includes temperament. In the past few years a 'new' type of Tibetan Mastiff has emerged on the scene. These dogs typically have more wrinkles and a very profuse coat. Since these types were not seen before the year 2000 it is unknown if they fit the description of the founders or the native dogs of this breed. Check pedigrees. If you have fallen in love with this type, be aware that they may not be as the available literature on Tibetan Mastiff describes or may have inherited health issues not common to Tibetan Mastiffs.

- E. **Talks negatively about MOST of the other Tibetan Mastiff breeders.** If their main topic of conversation is bad mouthing the other breeders, consider going elsewhere. There are some breeders that are known for unethical behavior, if a breeder discusses this with you after you mention a name, it may be valid. However, the breeder providing the information should be able to tell you specifics and not just say they are a bad breeder. Also be aware that there can be "bad blood" between breeders because of failed business or personal interactions and this can fuel negative perceptions. Take it with a grain of salt and then do your own research.
- F. **Will not allow you to pick your puppy up at their home or kennel.** They either state directly no pickups at their location or try hard to avoid you coming to their home or kennel.
- G. **Asks you what breed you are looking for.** You may have contacted a commercial breeder of multiple breeds.
- H. **If you have paid for your puppy in full you should leave with signed registration papers in hand** or the online registration is completed before you leave (get the confirmation printed OR downloaded on your file storage device!)
- I. **Do not leave without a copy of the signed contract.** Sign the contract before and get a copy with both the buyer and seller signatures before you leave with the pup. Sometimes breeders will have two copies of the contract available, one for the seller and one for the buyer. Both are signed. Don't forget to go line by line to make sure you understand and are in agreement with what you are signing.

## **YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR, BUYER'S RESPONSIBILITY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

***You get what you pay for.*** An old adage that rings true in dogs as well as any other purchase. If you purchase a puppy on price alone, you may not be getting a puppy from parents who were tested for genetically inherited health issues, a puppy who may have temperament issues, lack of breeder support and missing good practices that are listed above.

***If most of the puppies the breeder has for sale are at a lower price than most other breeder's pups,*** you may be dealing with a volume breeder whose primary purpose is to make money and at your, the dogs' and the breed's expense.

***As a buyer you have influence in how dogs are kept and raised.*** You may want to consider what your responsibilities are as a buyer and what you feel comfortable with before you make a purchase.

**WATCH FOR UPDATES! COMING SOON..... PUPPY BUYER CHECKLIST.**