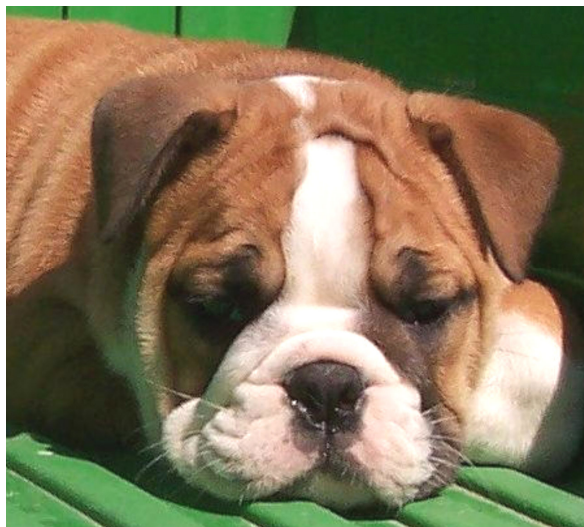


# BREEDING YOUR OWN LITTER

## What You Should Know

There is a great deal of work that goes into breeding a healthy litter of puppies. It takes a great deal of time, effort and money. A litter of puppies that you breed requires a lifetime commitment from you. Before breeding, health tests for genetic disorders; the extensive review of pedigrees; and buyer/seller contracts need to be completed.



Breeding dogs is **not** simply a matter of putting a male and female together and raking in the cash when you sell the puppies. The most important aspect of breeding a litter of puppies is why you want to breed. Maybe you have had people say that they want a dog just like yours. Do they really want one? Perhaps you want your children to experience a litter of puppies. This is an unrealistic expectation and will be much more work and money that it is worth. It is important to consider what you will do if not all (or even none) of the puppies sell. Dropping them off at the shelter or dumping them on the side of the road is not a responsible option. Are you willing and able to keep all the puppies that do not sell? Breeding takes time, dedication, and money

There are several health tests to look for genetic disorders that are needed before a dog is used for breeding.

- ➔ Checking, by x-rays in some cases, for orthopedic conditions should be completed and the results registered with the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals. Some tests require the dog be at least 2 years old, so breeding should wait until tests have been completed.
- ➔ Testing for brucellosis should be done before each breeding as it is highly contagious, can cause sterility, and can be passed to humans.
- ➔ There are also breed-specific tests that should be investigated. Genetic disorders exist that are specific to different breeds of dogs, and some of these disorders do not appear until the dog is older.
- ➔ Eyes should be evaluated by a registered ophthalmologist and the results registered with CERF.

Before making a decision to breed, you should be familiar with the dogs in the pedigree of both the male and female. What were their good points and what were their faults? What health problems did they have and what did they pass on to their puppies? What health problems did the littermates of the dogs in the pedigrees have? What were the temperaments like?

In addition, there are a few color genes and patterns in certain breeds that can have harmful effects on offspring if dogs with these are bred together. It is important to read the breed standards before you breed and be prepared for the potential defects that can be caused by certain colors. For example, the gene for merling pattern in certain breeds causes dilution of the coat color. When both parents pass this gene to the offspring, the resulting puppies can possibly be born deaf, blind or both.

Breeding requires a lot of research and should not be taken lightly. Even experienced breeders, if they get a dog of a different breed, will go to an expert for advice because they don't have the knowledge to make good decisions in new breeds.

Visit the AKC website for more information on responsible breeding or to find National Breed Clubs where you can begin your research on breed standards and breed-specific health issues.

There are points to consider when leaving your dog intact to use for breeding. Between breedings, the owner of a male dog has the responsibility of keeping the dog from roaming, being a nuisance, destroying property, or causing fights. Male dogs can climb or dig out of fences when a female is in heat in the vicinity. Some will mark in the house when a female is in heat, whine constantly, or become aggressive with other dogs. Females will come into heat on an average of every 6 months, and the cycle lasts for about 3 weeks. Besides the obvious bleeding and discharge to clean up, there is the confinement and isolation from other dogs necessary to prevent an accidental breeding.

If you are prepared to continue with the breeding, there is more to learn. The pregnant female will need additional food to maintain her body weight and nutritional needs while puppies are forming and growing inside her. Preparations will also be needed for a nursery, a quiet place for her to deliver the puppies. You should also be informed and able to recognize signs of distress during labor, and be prepared to assist in the delivery or be able to contact a vet for assistance.

Once the puppies are born they will benefit from gentle handling. At 21 thru 28 days all senses are functioning, they need to be exposed to different sights and sounds. They should be handled several times a day. Do simple exercises like clipping toenails to get them used to it. A good idea is to have other people (and children as the puppies get older) play with the puppies. Children should only handle the puppies under adult supervision. Make sure they have not been around other puppies (or any sick dogs) that day, have them wash their hands, and either remove their shoes or dip them in a Clorox solution.

For more information on raising puppies see "[The Critical Stages of Puppyhood](http://www.ncraoa.com/training.html)" at [www.ncraoa.com/training.html](http://www.ncraoa.com/training.html).

Puppies should be sold with contracts specifying what is expected of the buyer and seller. This includes the health guarantee and what will happen if the puppy should develop a health problem with a genetic link. Breeders should be honest about what health testing was done. Puppies should be sold on a spay/neuter clause and limited registration. If, for any reason the original buyer of the puppy can no longer keep him or her, an agreement that the puppy will be returned to you or placed in a home of which you approve. This part of the contract is to keep your puppies from ending up in a shelter, in a bad home or with an abusive breeder.

**Remember - You Are Responsible For The Lives You Help Bring Into This World.**

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