



**North West  
Golden Retriever Club**

## ***Guide to Buying a Puppy***

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## **PUPPY BUYERS' GUIDE**

### **BUYING A PUPPY: A BIG DECISION**

Buying a puppy is an important decision, and you're already doing the right thing by researching before you get one. Here are some things to think about before you bring a puppy home.

### **CAN YOU AFFORD A DOG?**

Before anything else, ask yourself if you can afford a dog. Along with the cost of buying a puppy, you'll need to think about other expenses like insurance, food, vet bills, toys, treats, training classes, and more. Owning a dog is a big financial commitment, it can be like having another mortgage. Also, do you have enough time to train and exercise a dog? If you answered "yes" to both, you're on the right track!

### **TEMPERAMENT MATTERS**

The most important thing to consider is temperament, you can have the most beautiful dog in the world, but if they have a poor temperament, they won't be an easy dog to live with. A true golden will have a lovely gentle, biddable character and will make a wonderful family companion.

### **WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM YOUR DOG?**

The next thing you need to consider is what do you hope to do with your dog. Are you looking for the perfect family companion, a working gundog, a dog to train for a sport such as agility, obedience, working trials, hooper, rally, scentwork, etc. We are so lucky these days to have all these activities that we can have fun training for. Some people just want a family pet to enjoy walks and the companionship, and that is just fine, Golden Retrievers excel in this role.

### **SHOW BRED VS. WORKING BRED**

Golden Retrievers are one breed, yet over the years breeders have bred for certain traits and we have a distinctive divide in the breed, show bred and working bred. Then to complicate it a little further, we have dual purpose lines. These usually come from show breeders who are passionate in keeping the working ability in their lines.

**Working bred dogs** are extremely clever and NEED a job to do. Asking a dog who for generations has been bred to work in the field with its handler, covering huge distances hunting and retrieving game, to be happy chilling on the sofa all day just isn't fair. An amble around the park for an hour after work isn't enough for these dogs, they get bored and frustrated and start to find their own way of having fun, which usually means trouble. A pet home just doesn't fulfil the needs of these dogs.

That isn't to say working bred dogs can't make wonderful pets, they can. If you are looking for a dog for obedience, agility, etc and are prepared to invest hours in their training and exercise, then a working line dog could be perfect for you. They are fast, flashy and incredibly intelligent.

**Show bred dogs** - When people think of a golden retriever, it is more than likely that they are thinking of a show bred golden. They tend to be heavier set than working bred dogs and have the beautiful flowing coat the breed is famous for.

Whilst much calmer than working lines, show bred goldens can still turn their hand to most tasks and excel in the role of assistance and therapy dogs. There are many people competing successfully in the various dog sports with their show bred golden, and they can also be seen picking up on shoots throughout the season, doing the job they were originally bred to do. The majority of show bred goldens are simply owned as a much-loved family pet and we can't think of a breed that does it better.

## **COLOUR**

Perhaps here we should mention colour. A lot of people believe that if they want a dark golden, similar in colour to the 'fox' red labrador that is so fashionable these days, they need to go for working lines. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are many show breeders who breed darker goldens. Show lines vary from the beautiful cream, right through the varying shades of gold to the dark golden.

## **HEALTH MATTERS**

Whether it be show or working, health is something that needs to be considered. There are no guarantees, but by buying a puppy from health tested parents, you stand the best chance of buying a puppy that will grow into a healthy adult and save yourself from much heartache and expense. You will find information on what health tests golden retrievers should have and what the results mean on our website.

## **WHY IS KENNEL CLUB REGISTRATION IMPORTANT?**

Even if you just want a family pet, we would ALWAYS recommend you purchase a KC Registered puppy. It not only gives you a 'family tree' for your puppy, but it also helps to ensure that you are buying from a breeder who follows good ethics. The Kennel Club will only allow registration if the puppy's mother is under the age of seven (except in exceptional circumstances), has not had more than four litters and has not been bred on consecutive seasons.

## **AVOIDING PUPPY FARMS**

We would never recommend sourcing a puppy from an online website. When we mention puppy farms, people imagine going to a seller in Wales who lives on a farm. Puppy farmers have got more and more sophisticated. There is a lot of money involved.

Puppies don't tend to be sold from the premises where they are bred. The puppy farmer often pays a family to host and sell the litter from their home address. When the puppies are advertised a 'burner' phone is used and when the litter is sold a new sim card is placed in the phone, this helps avoid detection. When the litter is dropped off, sometimes they are accompanied by a golden retriever bitch who is not the puppies' mother, but she will be shown to unsuspecting buyers as the mum. This bitch will be kept in good condition and be socialised, so that she looks like a lovely family pet who has whelped the litter. On the surface everything will look OK, but it is rare for the puppies to be lovely chunky puppies, with a happy, confident disposition, they are usually light in bone and reserved in nature. Quite often they have an illness developing, such as Parvo virus which can be fatal.

Sometimes the seller will 'very kindly' offer to meet the purchaser mid-way or even deliver the puppy to save the buyer having to travel. The puppies are literally sold from the boot of a car with the unsuspecting purchaser thinking they are buying from a lovely, caring person, who was concerned about them having to travel.

Occasionally buyers turn up to view puppies, and are horrified by the conditions of the puppies. Their hearts take over and they think they are rescuing the puppy by going ahead and purchasing it, when in reality they are just fuelling the market. Please don't be one of these people, as well meaning as it is, as long as people keep buying from these individuals, they will keep on breeding.

We would urge you to follow our advice, seek out a breeder and forge a relationship with them before purchasing the puppy. You must see the mother with the puppies in the breeder's home. Watch how she interacts with the pups, she will have a baggy undercarriage where she has been feeding the puppies.

## **FINDING A RESPONSIBLE BREEDER**

Reputable breeders who have the breed's welfare at heart don't breed often and usually have a waiting list. It is worth the wait, or to travel a distance, to get the right puppy. Most responsible breeders don't charge a deposit and equally don't charge an inflated price. Surprisingly a puppy from a reputable breeder is likely to cost far less than one from a puppy farmer. If the breeder does ask for a deposit, please don't pay this before the puppy has been born and you have been to see them and always make sure you get a receipt.

Our advice would be to visit a local show, have a chat with the breeders (not just as they are preparing their dog for the ring) and strike up a relationship. They may have

a litter planned, or if they have stud dogs, they might be able to point you in the direction of someone with a nice litter planned.

If it is a working bred dog, whilst we do not currently have a working side, there are still members of our committee that can put you in touch with a good breeder.

A good breeder will welcome a visit from you before they add you to their waiting list. Ideally all the family should visit, so the breeder can gauge how committed all the family are. Be prepared to be asked a lot of questions and ask a lot of questions yourself. The breeder should be happy to let you meet all her dogs, not just the potential mother. If the breeder is planning a litter, has space on their waiting list and is happy to add you to it, she might show you the health certificates at this stage and will be happy to explain what the numbers mean. It isn't likely you will get to see the sire, not many breeders own both, but she will be able to show you a picture of him and will have the copy of his health certificates.

When the litter is born you must always see the puppies with their mother. A typical golden retriever bitch will be happy for you to see her puppies. The area they are in should be clean and there should be toys in the area for the puppies to interact with. The more the puppies are exposed to in the early weeks the better, different textures, sounds and scents. Ideally, they will be exposed to the usual household noises such as television, washing machine, hoovers, etc. Should the weather allow, it is ideal if the puppies have had the opportunity to play outside, exploring the big wide world.

A good breeder will have spent many hours on the floor interacting with puppies and they will have had plenty of visitors. The puppies should be confident and happy. Don't be fooled by the quiet puppy in the corner who is sleeping and calm, she might have just had a whale of a time tearing around with her litter mates and be tired. Likewise, the lively one who looks to be full of fun, might have just woken up and be fully recharged. Let the breeder guide you as to which is the right puppy for your family. She will have spent many hours observing and interacting with the litter and be perfectly placed to match you to the right puppy.

## **COLLECTING YOUR PUPPY**

When the exciting day comes along, the breeder should provide you with a contract of sale, copy of health certificates, pedigree, diet sheet and Kennel Club Registration documents. Your puppy will have been microchipped and you will be given the documentation. It is likely that she will send you home with some of the food the puppy has been reared on. Don't be tempted to change this, or you may be setting yourself up for upset tummies. The breeder is experienced with her lines and knows what foods suit them.

Once you are home, you will still have support from your breeder, they are only a phone call away and will much rather you call and ask for advice rather than struggle. Remember, they have a wealth of knowledge and to them no question is silly. Nowadays a lot set up a WhatsApp Group for the litter which is really helpful, as you can all compare notes.

## **TRAINING AND SOCIALIZATION**

If you haven't already done so, don't delay seeking out a good puppy training class, they get booked up very quickly. A lot of time needs to be invested in your pup to help mould them into the perfect companion for your family, but by going to a reputable breeder, who has laid good foundations, you will already be half way there. Good luck and enjoy and your puppy.