

Scottie Terriers 02/16

*“Where oh where have all the Scotties gone?”*

A current hot topic is registration numbers. Many articles are being written and concern is voiced about continuing downward trends. Our breed has been hit hard over the past two decades. An obvious point is less people are breeding. Buy what other ways might breeders help contribute to changing this trend.

The lobby and advertising efforts of Animal Rights groups have worked to convince the public that breeders are a cause of overpopulation and it is better to adopt than buy a purebred. A recent example of how effective this has become is when one of my clients was chastised by her neighbor for wanting to buy a Golden from a breeder. By doing so she would be responsible for a dog dying in a shelter. She called me to talk about it. She did get her Golden.

Then there is the myth that hybrids (new term for mix breed) are healthier because by they will not carry genetic faults and illnesses’. If you are going to buy, then buy one of these. Statistics are coming out that do not support this but it is slow to gain ground.

Economics, purebreds are perceived as expensive so people look elsewhere. That puts breeders in competition with shelters and rescue groups who will go out and find a dog anywhere in or out of the US to keep customers. I recently saw an ad for a large NY based shelter looking to buy puppies to help their supply for customers. Certainly less expensive than a private breeder’s costs.

Breeders should explain what they charge for a dog. People see the large price tag and multiply it by the number of pups and think wow, what an easy way to make money. They don’t realize the vet bills, the cost of breeding, health testing and personal time. They also need to know that they get a lifetime resource in the relationship they will have with their breeder.

Are breeders as welcoming to new owners as the puppy mills, shelters and pet stores? When someone calls do you listen first or do you immediately go into an interrogation. Everyone wants good homes but be cautious as to how you come across. I recently sent one of my local police officers to several breeders of another breed for a pup for his family. He had done his research. One never returned the call, another had no pups and offered no additional help. The third offended him by making him feel he was inferior and not deserving of their breed. Needless to say he went and bought the hybrid from the “very nice lady” in North Carolina.

Should Kennels be on the internet? Or is that as what the “puppy mills” do. Is there really harm to be out there where the public is looking instead of relying on word of mouth. Is there educational material about the breed on the websites? Does it address possible health issues? Be welcoming and willing to educate someone who has never owned a Scottie.

Contracts are important and I tell my clients at the kennel that a good breeder will have one. A good one will include a clause that states the dog must come back to them should you no longer want it. I took back an 11-year-old female when her owner deceased. She left funds and instructions in her will but her daughter in law did not like dogs. Fortunately, her son saw our contract and called.

What about show clauses in contract when you know the people only want a pet. I was involved in that a few times as a handler. Someone fell in love with a pup and didn’t really think they would have to show. What happens when it’s not a positive experience? In one case I told the breeder the dog (not a

Scottie) should not be shown. The people wanted their pup at home and the pup did not have the attitude and was average quality, but they agreed to give a couple of shows a try. After no success, I sent the puppy home. The breeder wanted another champion for their records and insisted they go to another handler. Months later the pup finally went home with 2 points. My guess is those people wouldn't get another purebred from a breeder. Sometimes pups just need to go to good homes.

AKC is adding some incentives for registering, items like microchips and magazines. But how to encourage them to register? Research supports the belief that pet owners may not bother because of cost and there is no compelling reason to do so. Maybe help them fill it out and even possibly pay the fee and mail it in to AKC.

Ultimately this not only affects our breed but the sport as a whole. We are very fortunate that the STCA has some wonderful volunteers who work in breeder referral to help people locate a Scottie. In the end we can all be more proactive in celebrating our breed and making sure we are inclusive, welcoming and helpful when that phone call comes. After all we know there is nothing better than the love and adoration of a Scottie.

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