

## BREEDING & HEALTH TESTING

*Compiled by Agi Hejja*

Breeding healthy, structurally and temperamentally sound dogs is not as simple as putting two of the same breed together... a lot of breed knowledge, an eye for the dog, and health testing of parents, (genetic and conventional) goes into each and every litter.

1) Breed knowledge: Breeders spend a good part of their time continually learning about their breed. They go to dog shows, dog seminars, evaluate litters, share information, generally "they are a student" of their breed. The learning never stops! Beware of any breeder who claims to know it all!

2) An eye for a dog: this is something somebody is born with or has to learn by evaluating many dogs of many breeds. What does it mean? It means that a breeder can tell its dog's faults and merits by looking at the dog's outline, movement, and structure.

3) A breeder should be willing to provide you with references, people who have dogs from you, people in the Kuvasz community that know them well. Your breeder should be there for you long term, to answer any questions that come up now or in 10-15 years.

4) Health testing: while the first two requirements must be learned by the breeder, health testing is what veterinarians do for us. We test our dogs to find out what kind of issues we may deal with, then we can make educated decisions how to improve our line. There is no perfect dog!!! Currently the Kuvasz Club of America recommends hips, elbows, thyroid testing.

Would you like to research a breeder and the health of their dogs?

The OFA database at [www.offa.org](http://www.offa.org) is searchable. Go to the database and enter a breeder's kennel name in the name field. Select "as part of a name". Select "Kuvasz". Go to the bottom and select "search". All of the dogs with health testing from that breeder will be displayed there. If a breeder has only had one or two litters, you may not find many dogs under their kennel name, but by selecting the individual dogs of interest you can find out about the parents of the dog and their clearances as well as siblings, half siblings and offspring. A breeder who has had 55 litters should have pages and pages of dogs entered there. If they do not, why not? What could possibly be a justifiable reason? The OFA database accepts hip clearances from sources other than OFA, such as GDC, OVC and PennHip as well as health results for many other things. There is NO good reason for not including health data on dogs born after 1/1/2005.

Dogs born after 1/1/2005 should have at least minimal testing requirements completed. Minimal testing requirements are hips, elbows and thyroid. Dogs born prior to 1/1/2005 may or may not have that information posted. It was not common practice to do elbows and thyroid on all dogs prior to that date. Beginning in 2006 there is a genetic test available to breeders for PRA, progressive retinal atrophy. Conscientious breeders have been posting their dogs PRA status on the OFA website. Since it is a genetic test there is no reason to test offspring out of clear parents. Those dogs may not be listed in the database, but a breeder should be able to and willing to prove to you the PRA status of the parents of your puppy.

Conscientious breeders do health testing and make decisions based on those tests results in the hope that we can continue to improve the health of our breeding dogs and your puppy. It is important for puppy buyers to report any health concerns to your breeder as those health concerns may impact future breeding decisions. There is much we do not know until genetic tests become available for more health concerns. If we all cooperate by sharing health data in the OFA database, the health of the breed will be better for it.

A conscientious breeder should have the respect of their peers. They should be willing to refer you to a quality breeder, if they do not have any puppies when you inquire, and you are unwilling to be placed on their waiting list AND their peers should be willing to refer you back to them. Sometimes it is important to listen to what a breeder doesn't say in regard to breeders they may not have recommended.

Breeders who voluntarily list negative health data along with passing health data should not have the negative health data used as a weapon against them. Everyone has negative health data, the shame is in hiding it, not openly sharing it. Here is an excellent article on the proper use of health testing and the consequences of using health testing as a weapon. <http://www.cavalierhealth.co.uk/misuse.htm>

As stated by C.A. Sharp, in the excellent article "**Bad Genes, Babies and Bathwater**" (see link below)

"Knowledgeable dog people know there is no perfect dog. Even the best of them have faults. The faults are not only those conformation or behavioral problems you can readily observe, but also bad genes. Dogs have at least 80,000 genes. No matter how high the standards for selection of breeding stock or how strict the culling of offspring, every dog will have genes for unwanted traits. Experts agree that every individual--be he dog, human or cauliflower--probably carries, three "lethal equivalents." This may leave you wondering why we aren't seeing dogs and cauliflowers, not to mention each other, dropping like flies all around us"

[http://www.ashgi.org/articles/breeding\\_bad\\_genes.htm](http://www.ashgi.org/articles/breeding_bad_genes.htm)

Dr. Jerold Bell, with Tufts University, is one of the leading canine geneticists and researchers today. He has many excellent breeding articles published on the internet. See the following link for one of his most popular articles: "**Responsible Breeding Management of Genetic Disease**"

<http://www.tualatinkc.org/pdf/Responsible%20Breeding%20Management%20of%20Genetic%20Disease.pdf>

Other articles by Dr. Bell:

"**The Genetic Gamble**": <http://www.boxerunderground.com/bu2000/abc2000/genetics.htm>

"**It's All In The Genes**": <http://www.wolfweb.com.au/acd/itsallinthegenes.html>

"**Developing a Healthy Breeding Program**": [http://wirefox.info/developing\\_a\\_healthy\\_breeding\\_pr.htm](http://wirefox.info/developing_a_healthy_breeding_pr.htm)