

Reading Between The Lines

(Or, separating fact from fiction)

Dane Outreach has become extremely concerned about the large volume of incorrect information unknowledgeable, unethical, or uncaring and unscrupulous breeders* are giving to the potential Dane purchaser about Great Danes. Much of this misinformation is used as a “selling point” by puppy mills and backyard breeders to the uninformed Dane purchaser.

The first line of defense for the potential purchaser would be to do their homework and educate themselves on the Great Dane breed. There are many excellent articles at www.gdca, www.DaneOutreach.com and www.ginnie.com on Great Danes. Below are some of the claims commonly used by unethical breeders and correct information for item.

Rare or Unusual Colors

No such thing! While some of the Great Dane colors may be more common than others, the breed does not have “rare” or “unusual” colors. Dogs labeled “rare” are almost always mismarks, considered a disqualification by the breed standard, cannot be shown, and in general should not be bred. Great Danes come in six recognized colors (fawn, brindle, black, blue, harlequin and mantle) and are divided into five color families (1. fawn/brindle, 2. black out of black breeding, 3. black out of blue breeding, 4. black out of harlequin breeding, 5. harlequin). The Great Dane Club of America is very specific on what color families can and cannot be bred together. Crossing color families can result in “off” or mismarked colors. While these dogs can certainly go on to make excellent pets, the colors are not desired, cannot be shown, never should be bred and should not be considered a desirable trait. A white dog with fawn or brindle spots would indicate that somewhere in the pedigree a harlequin color-family dog was bred to a fawn or brindle. If a breeder is touting a “rare” color as a selling point, and it’s not one of the recognized ones, run! It’s a very large red flag. For more information on Great Dane color and the Great Dane Club of America’s color code, please go to www.GDCA.org. For examples of Dane colors, please see the color section at www.DaneOutreach.org.

Reasons For Not Doing Health Testing

Great Danes are a wonderful breed, but they do have many potential health problems. Concerned and caring breeders will do health testing on their adult breeding stock to make sure they are clear of possible genetic diseases. While many Great Dane health problems cannot be currently tested for, it's a start and all of the better breeders do it. The most common health screenings done on Great Danes are for hips, eyes, heart and thyroid. Once a dog has passed their health screenings, the breeder will receive documentation stating this. Don't take a breeder's word on health testing. Require proof-and check that proof. All dogs that have passed the various screenings can generally be looked up at the OFA or CERF websites and should be proofed for accuracy that way. It's sad, but there have been cases of documentation being forged. If the animal is listed on the site, he has indeed received his certifications. Please note to look up information on websites you will need to know the AKC number of the dog in question.

Unethical breeders make up many excuses for not doing health testing or they are misleading about what has actually been done. Unfortunately, the unsuspecting purchaser believes them, and the owner, the dog, and the breed suffers because of it.

Any of the below statements should raised an immediate red flag:

- The dogs are young and healthy and show no signs of any problem so I don't need to health test.
- I don't have any problems in my line.
- You don't need to health test if you only breed for pets.
- Breeder "X" must do health testing because they have problems in their line. I don't have problems so I don't have to health test.
- My dog had a health check-up at the vet and the vet said he/she looked just fine.
- I have my puppies jump over a small jump and they can do it, so therefore their hips are fine.
- The breeder says they have done health testing but cannot provide proof of same; or if does, the documents cannot be verified with the certification agency like OFA and CERF via their website.

- Only one parent has health testing.

Claims To Fame

Unethical breeders can get very creative on this one, because unless a potential purchaser is familiar with the dog show world, it's difficult to check out.

- Claiming a dog is “show quality” simply because of the color alone. While color is important in Great Danes, and to be shown the dog must be one of the recognized colors, a show dog must have many more attributes than *just* color. They must have correct breed type, correct conformation, proper dentition, proper and sound movement and great temperament. Unethical breeders will often say something to the effect that “this dog is show quality because he doesn't have any white on him” (as in relation to a solid-colored Dane).
- A breeder who represents a dog as show quality when they themselves have never shown, have never bred a Champion, do not know what is involved in showing, and have not had the dog evaluated by an experienced handler or breeder is a red flag. Unfortunately, this happens all the time and the dog is rarely of the quality to be shown or used in a breeding program.
- Claiming they show their dogs, yet they have never put a title on a dog and none of the other show-going Dane folks know who they are. If they have attempted showing, they show their blue ribbons off, realizing the average person doesn't know a blue first place ribbon is not impressive-it's the purple ribbons that count!
- Making claims of “champion” pedigrees, when there may only be one or two champions in the whole pedigree. A good pedigree consists of Champions in close generations, like parents and grandparents.
- Calling dogs Champions when in fact they are not AKC (American Kennel Club) titled dogs. In the serious dog show community, when one says “Champion” the inference is that the dog is an AKC Champion. Unfortunately, people with International, UKC and other registries sometimes call their dogs Champions, when the proper way to list such would be “Intl. Ch. Fred”. This can be misleading. It should be noted that

it is far more difficult to obtain an AKC title than an International or other type of title.

Registration Matters

Generally in the dog world, registration indicates that the dog is registered with the AKC (American Kennel Club) or CKC (Canadian Kennel Club, ***not*** to be confused with the Continental Kennel Club). While there are other registering bodies, these two are considered by the serious dog fancy as “the real thing”. Purchasers should be very careful about registration matters.

- A puppy bred and born in the US can be eligible for AKC registration ***only*** if both of the parents are registered with the AKC. The breeder of the litter must apply for a litter application for the puppies, and must give these to the purchasers in order for the puppy to be registered. The AKC has rules about “selling” registration papers, where the breeder asks one price for puppies “with papers” and another “without papers”. This is considered unethical to do. Please visit the AKC site at www.akc.org for more information on registration.
- A puppy born and bred in Canada can be eligible for registration with the Canadian Kennel Club. For more information, please visit the CKC site at www.CanadianKennelClub.ca.
- Puppies out of dogs on an AKC limited registration *cannot* be registered with the AKC.
- The serious dog fancy considers the Continental Kennel Club registry invalid. Dogs solely registered with this registry cannot be shown in AKC or Canadian Kennel Club events. Additionally, this registry will “register” any purebred without adequate documentation and proof of parentage. This registry has become a venue for breeders who are unable to register their dogs with the AKC. Many puppy mills and back yard breeders, who are unable to meet the requirements of the AKC, use this registry. Additionally, they will register AKC limited registration dogs, which many consider unethical. It is this authors opinion that a dog registered solely with the Continental Kennel Club is no different from an unregistered animal.
- Advertising dogs as “dual registered” as a selling point.

- For more details on registration matters, please visit the AKC website at www.akc.org and the Canadian Kennel Club at www.ckc.ca.

Shows and Titles Are Not Created Equal

Those serious in the dog show fancy consider showing at AKC and Canadian Kennel Club shows “the real thing”. There are other venues people might show dogs at, such as International Shows, UKC Shows, etc. However, it should be noted that obtaining a AKC title or Canadian Kennel Club title is much more difficult than from any of the other venues. So, a Best in Show at an AKC show may mean that dog defeated over 2500 dogs, while a Best in Show at an International show may mean the dog only defeated 350 dogs. Many people show in several different venues and get numerous titles on their dogs. It’s up to you to clarify what venue that title was earned at.

Claims of Longevity and/or No Health Problems

Some unethical breeders will claim they are breeding for longevity. However, when questioned, they cannot tell you the life span of any of the dogs in the pedigree, or what they died from. A breeder truly doing this will have health and lifespan history for many generations.

The breeder who claims he doesn’t have any problems in his line either has not been involved in the breed long enough, is being untruthful, or simply doesn’t keep track of the puppies he produces or doesn’t know enough about the breed to recognize the problems. Any established, long-term breeder will tell you that if you breed long enough you will come across every problem in the breed. Ethical breeders will tell you what problems they have in their lines.

How Does This Affect You?

If your desire is to simply own a Dane as a pet, you may wonder how all these false claims affect you. Well, if the breeder is not honest and knowledgeable about any of the things listed in this brochure, then it’s quite questionable how much correct information they are going to give you about the puppy you are looking to purchase. To quote, “let the buyer beware” and “there’s a

sucker born every minute” appears to be the mission statement with some of these breeders!

Here are statements commonly heard from back yard breeders that they use to defend their poor breeding practises. Written by Denna Pace - Please credit when quoting.

1. When called on bad breeding practices, ALWAYS claim that you are merely an innocent, posting the information as a favor to a friend or family member.
2. Point out that everybody you know breeds this way, therefore it must be okay.
3. Claim that "snobby show breeders" are only criticizing you because they want to corner the market on puppy profit.
4. Claim that a Champion in the pedigree is just as good as 56 Champions in the pedigree. Not that it matters, because you doubt that there is such a thing as a dog with 56 champions in the pedigree.
5. Claim that you are just trying to produce good pets, therefore good pets are all you need for breeding.
6. When asked about health testing, enthusiastically point out that your bitch had a health checkup before breeding.
7. Be sure to mention that you do not need to run such health tests as OFA,CERF, thyroid, cardiac, patellae, etc., because your dogs look healthy and had no visible problems at their last vet checkup.
8. Point out that these tests cost too much and would cut into your profit margin. Be sure to champion the right of poor people to breed dogs.
9. Confidently assure worried rescuers that no puppy you produce, or any of their puppies or grand-puppies or great-grandpuppies will end up in shelters because you have a bunch of friends who have told you that they'd like a pup from your bitch.
10. Point out that you don't need Championships or working titles on your dogs because you are breeding for temperament and your dog is really sweet.
11. Silence those annoying people who ask about your health guarantee by assuring them that buyers can return any sick puppies and you will replace it with another pup as long as it got sick within a certain amount of time of sale and as long as you don't think the buyer did something to make the puppy

sick.

12. If your breed or line is rare (or you have a "rare" color, or believe your breed or color is rare), be sure to remind everyone that you do not need to show, temperament test, or health test your breeding stock because you are doing the world a service by continuing this "rare" breed/color/line.

13. No matter what anyone else says, claim that you obviously know what you are doing because you've been breeding for a long time. Point to the hundreds of puppies you've pumped out over the years as proof.

14. If this is your first attempt at breeding, make sure to remind everyone that you **HAVE** to breed your dog because how else are you going to learn how to breed?

15. Assure everyone that your dog does not need to be shown because you were assured by someone at Petsmart/the park/the vet's office/a friend that your dog is a perfect example of the breed.

16. Always remember that "rare" colors, oversized or undersized dogs, and mixes of popular breeds are great selling points. Anyone who doesn't think so is obviously not in tune with their customers' wishes.

17. Claim that your dogs are better because they are not inbred, as inbreeding obviously produces sick/stupid/deformed dogs. If breeding poo [as in "Cock-a-Poo," "Peek-a-Poo," etc.] dogs or other mutts, always point to "hybrid vigor" as proof of your dogs' superiority.

18. Remind everyone that you do not need a waiting list because your puppies are cute.

19. Assure everyone that your puppies will not end up in shelters because they are cute.

20. Claim that **YOUR** breed never ends up in shelters in your area, therefore your puppies will never end up in shelters.

21. If asked why you think your dogs are breeding quality, point out that they "have papers." Extra points awarded for using the phrase "AKC Certified." Double points if those papers come from the Continental Kennel Club.

22. If you sell a sick puppy, always blame the owners for making it sick. If the owners are clearly not responsible, blame their vet. (see #11)

23. If presented with irrefutable evidence proving you wrong on any excuses you have used, pretend your server did not receive the post/e-mail.

24. Claim that none of the rules of ethical breeding apply to you because you

only intend to have one litter and therefore aren't a "real" breeder.
25. If all else fails, tell everyone who criticizes you to "get a life."

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*A breeder is simply someone who produces a litter of puppies. The term "breeder", on its own, does not apply the person is good, bad or indifferent. The mixed-breed owner who lets his bitch run the streets while in season is the "breeder" of the resulting litter, as is the person who shows, health tests and offers a support system to their purchaser.