

2. Phase II: Researching Breeders, Breeding Pairs, Health and Temperament Issues, Contracts, and Registries

The key to Phase II is learning the right questions to ask and being able to interpret the responses. And it can get even more complicated because sometimes a buyer likes a breeder but not the breeding pair to be used or visa versa. So it is important to determine your criteria for a puppy ahead of time, and then find a breeder who you believe can produce the traits you are looking for. The odds of a "perfect match" are rare so you do need to consider what you are willing to compromise on and that can include health testing, health guarantees, contract clauses, price, logistics (the ability to attend the litter evaluation in person or have the puppy shipped to you), etc. Sometimes it boils down to waiting for the right litter or if you are in a hurry for a puppy, it means compromising on some of your criteria.

Breeders

- 2.1. References
- 2.2. Reputation
- 2.3. Kennel Facilities
- 2.4. Puppy Raising Process
- 2.5. Honesty About Lines

2.1 References: Talk to people who have purchased puppies from the breeder. How helpful has the breeder been? Would the customer buy another puppy from this breeder? If possible, find someone who experienced a problem and see how they felt about how the problem was resolved or handled (if not resolved). Make sure you get both sides of the story because there are always two viewpoints when there is a problem. Do not fall for pretty web sites—ensure there is substance behind them. Check out the local Better Business Bureau--have their been any complaints filed against this breeder? If you are on the ShilohZone, you can check out the Shiloh Buyers Advocacy Rating System (SBARS) database.

2.2 Reputation: Listen to the "jungle drums" on any Internet breed lists you are on and follow up privately with people you respect. The truth is out there if you take the time to look for it. If the state in which the breeder resides requires pet dealers or kennels to be licensed and the breeder fits the state's definition for licensing, ask for his or her state license number and verify it with the issuing agency.

2.3 Kennel Facilities: Nothing paints a picture of a breeder better than how he or she keeps his or her dogs. I look for cleanliness, food, and shelter but just as important for me is where my puppy is raised. I want a puppy that is raised as part of the family, not in a kennel. I want to know that my puppy is exposed to noises, people and dogs coming and going, and lots of love and attention from the time he/she enters this life right up to the time I take him/her home.



2.4 Puppy Raising Process: What is the breeder's philosophy of puppy raising? Does the breeder use the Super Puppy Program (<http://www.breedingbetterdogs.com/achiever.html>) Where are the puppies raised? What kind of stimulation do they get? What does the breeder do with regards to noise, socialization, health, etc.,? Will you receive a health certificate signed by a vet? Is it a law in that state that you get a health certificate when you purchase a puppy? Will the puppy be crate trained (even more important if the puppy is to be shipped to you)?

2.5 Honesty About Lines: It is not the breeder who tells me about problems in his or her lines that I fear—it is the breeder who tells me he or she has no problems that scares me. Any breeder who breeds long enough is going to encounter problems—it is a fact of life. What I want to know is what, if anything, did the breeder do once the problem was identified. I also want to know what the breeder's goals for his or her lines are and how he or she plans to achieve those goals.

Breeding Pairs

- 2.6. Expectations of Pairing
- 2.7. Littermate Information (LMI)
- 2.8. Seeing is Believing

2.6 Expectations of Pairing: Check out the breeding stock--do the dogs appeal to your senses? Why did the breeder breed these two dogs? What does he or she expect to see in the progeny? What are the potential weaknesses and potential strengths of this litter? And run from the breeder who says he or she does not expect to see any weaknesses—that is the definition of a breeder who is kennel blind. Then ask for references (names of puppy owners) or if you are on



the ShilohZone, check out the Photo sections of the Zone or Gallery to see if any Zoners own puppies related to this pairing and contact them privately. You can also do what some people do--post a message stating you are looking at a particular pairing and you would like to communicate with owners of siblings (if this is a repeated litter). If you are interested in showing conformation, do the parents have titles? If you are interested in working dogs, do the parents have any working titles or do they exhibit working traits? If the litter is advertised as "working," what proof can the breeder provide that working traits exist in the line? The first thing to look for is working titles: obedience, herding, Schutzhund, agility, or certified in therapy or SAR. If neither parent has a title, the next best thing is to ask for information about the sire and dam's puppy temperament tests (look at the scores for retrieve drive, problem-solving, food motivation, etc., or even better, did either sire or dam have a PAWS test done when they were puppies). Has either parent had any training in obedience, herding, agility, etc.? How did they do, did they like it, did they train easily (ask probing questions)? Just because a breed is part of the herding group (or working group or sporting group) does not mean the puppy can work which is unfortunate

when you consider that dogs in these groups were bred for a function that today many cannot perform or have no desire to perform. The very traits that people come to expect in a breed often get lost over time in some lines so if working traits are important to you, the puppy testing will become even more significant especially if the parents do not have working titles.

2.7 Littermate Information (LMI): Is this a repeated litter and if so, does the breeder have any information on the previous litter? If not, ask for contact information of the customers of prior litters or half sibling litters (litters the sire and dam have on the ground with other breeding partners). If it is a first litter for sire or dam, get contact information on customers of siblings of sire and dam. Good breeders collect as much LMI as they can and keep detailed records but as always, life is a compromise and if you cannot get LMI information, data on siblings, half-siblings, parents, and any other relatives is better than nothing.

2.8 Seeing is Believing: Visit with the sire and dam in person if logically feasible. There is no better predictor of temperament than the temperament of the sire and dam. If visiting in person is not possible, try to find someone who has interacted with them--maybe at a show or event--or try to find someone who can visit with them and report back to you. Bottom line—do the sire and dam represent the kind of dog you want to own?

Health Testing

- 2.9. Proof of Testing
- 2.10. Types of Health Testing
- 2.11. Health Issues in the Lines

2.9 Proof of Testing: Ask about health testing on the breeding pair and ask to see proof (either the dogs are listed in the OFA health database, or the owner can supply a copy of PennHIP results, or if the dog only has OFA prelims and you are willing to accept this, ask to see a copy of the prelim reports and a copy of the TLI report for EPI). I have pretty high standards so not all breeders are doing all the testing I like to see done. You will have to decide what you can live with (or without). Shilohs are subject to all the same health problems as German Shepherds. The next section describes the types of health testing I look for in prospective parents:



2.10 Types of Health Testing

- OFA Hip certificate and/or a PennHIP report (even better if they can supply this information for several generations and not just sire and dam)
- OFA Elbow certificate
- OFA Heart certificate (should be updated every two years)

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- OFA Thyroid certificate (should be updated every two years)
- CERF certificate (expires after two years)
- EPI test (TLI) should be done at least twice (over a period of a couple of months) to see if the score is dropping or if EPI is in the lines, it should be done prior to each breeding
- DNA test (DNA is on file with a reputable agency)
- vWd Negative (von Wildebrands disease) if sire or dam is a GSD outcross

2.11 Health Issues in the Lines: Ask about issues in the lines. Some lines of Shilohs have a genetic predisposition for certain health issues. Ethical breeders will be honest about their issues—good, bad, and/or ugly. I do not fear the breeder who is open and honest about his or her issues. Anyone who breeds long enough is going to produce some health issues—it is what he or she does about them that separates the wheat from the chaff.

Temperament Issues

- 2.12. Temperament Data
- 2.13. Adult Temperament Tests
- 2.14. Temperament Issues in the Lines
- 2.15. Litter Evaluation



2.12 Temperament Data: The first thing I ask for is information on the litter evaluation report for both sire and dam, if available. How did they score as puppies? Does the current owner believe they “lived up” to the test results? The difficult part of this analysis is that not all temperament tests are created equally, and if the test was not conducted and interpreted correctly, the results could be compromised and that will affect an owner’s responses to this question. So it is necessary to ask probing questions as well—ask how the dog responds to certain stimuli (cats, kids, first-time visitors, small dogs, big dogs, etc.). What is the dog’s personality at home versus in public? Is the dog territorial, does it have prey drive? What is the owner’s favorite story about the dog? What is the owner’s worst experience with the dog? People look for different things in a dog so a “wrong” answer for you could be another person’s “right” answer. Then I want to know if the dog passed an adult temperament

test and if so which test, and can I see the scores?

2.13 Adult Temperament Tests: This is a very important data element when searching for a puppy. Can the breeder provide copies of the adult temperament tests for the sire and dam? As stated earlier, the best indicator of temperament in puppies besides the puppy TT is the temperament seen in the sire and dam. I am very prejudiced on this subject—I believe the best adult dog temperament test available today is the American Temperament Test Society’s (ATTS) test (<http://www.atts.org/>). I am as proud of earning this certification on my dogs as I would be of any working or conformation titles. But life is full of compromises and many registries will accept a Canine Good Citizen (CGC) test with gunfire (<http://www.akc.org/events/cgc/index.cfm>) as an adult temperament test. My problem with this is that I feel the CGC is more of a training capability test than a true temperament test. I believe a dog needs to be tested under stress



to really assess its adult temperament.

2.14 Temperament Issues in the Lines: Because we know elements of temperament are inherited as well as influenced by environment, the best way to learn about a puppy’s potential temperament is by evaluating the sire and dam and grandsire and grandam if possible. As I mentioned previously, I use what I call “probing questions” to better assess the temperament of a sire and dam. I ask the same questions about the grandsire, grandam, and siblings (sometimes this information is not available). I ask owners to tell me



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stories about the dogs under a particular set of circumstances such as: how does the dog react to strangers, to loud noises, to groups of people in public, to a squirrel, rabbit, or cat? I tailor the questions to investigate the traits I am looking for and those traits I would rather avoid.

2.15 Litter Evaluation: You should ask about the litter evaluation (LE). Will a puppy LE be conducted, by whom, and will you be able to attend? Can you get a copy of the puppy temperament test to be used in advance so you can study it? Will you get a copy of the results? I always score the tests myself when I attend an LE, but I like to see what the “official” results are as well. If the breeder does not allow people to attend the LE or does not provide copies of the LE results, this is a “red flag” for me. A compromise would be the ability to see a tape of the LE before you make a final decision.



Contracts

- 2.16. Know the Laws of the Breeder’s State and Your Own State
- 2.17. Deposit and Purchase Price
- 2.18. Buyer Responsibilities
- 2.19. Clarity and Fairness
- 2.20. Clauses and Operational Definitions

2.16 Know the Laws Regarding Contracts in Your Breeder’s State and Your Own State: The first step in contract evaluation is to know the laws governing pet purchases in the state in which the contract was created, if any. You should also know the laws that govern the sale of puppies in your own state as well, if any, but it is usually the state in which the contract was created that has precedence. However, even armed with this knowledge, it is important to know and I quote from the Shih Tzu site listed below: **“If you purchase a puppy out-of-state, even if your state and the state where the animal was purchased have Lemon Laws in place, it is nearly impossible to get a replacement puppy or financial reimbursement across state lines.”** I am going to add “if your breeder is an unethical breeder.” Ethical breeders uphold their contracts and that is why you need to research breeders carefully and ensure the one you choose has a good reputation. However, finding information about state laws is not always easy. I spent hours researching for this information in my own State of California and if not for a great Maltese site (<http://www.malteseonly.com/lemon.html>) and Shih Tzu site (http://www.stfsc.bizland.com/leg_lemon22.htm), I would still be searching! I have seen references stating that 19 states have passed Puppy Lemon Laws, but I could only identify 15 of them: AR, AZ, CA, CT, FL, ME, MA, MN, NH, NJ, NY, PA, SC, VA, and VT. You can read up on the laws in each of these states here: <http://www.malteseonly.com/lemon.html> (You can also check the AKC Legislative Alerts site: http://www.akc.org/news/sections/legislative_alerts.cfm for the most up-to-date legislative actions involving canines.)

In some states the laws do not apply to hobby breeders or kennels unless they produce a certain number of puppies per year. And this number varies—in California it is 50 dogs/puppies per year, in New York it is 9 per year, and in Florida it is 2 litters per year or 20 puppies per year whichever figure is greater. Nonetheless, it is good to know what laws pertain when purchasing a puppy in a particular state. In addition, some of the states require certain verbiage be in contracts as in mandatory refunds for certain issues making the “replacement puppy only—no cash refund” clause null and void. Some states even require that health certificates completed by veterinarians accompany each puppy sold. In addition, some airlines have health certificate requirements before they will fly a puppy.



One of the advantages to knowing the laws pertaining to your breeder’s state is that you can quickly discern an ethical breeder from an unethical or uneducated breeder (one who is not familiar with his or her own state laws). Lastly, some states require pet dealers (this is associated with the number of puppies/dogs sold per year—in other words in California you are a Pet Dealer if you sell 50 puppies/dogs per year; in Florida you are a Pet Dealer if you sell 2 litters or 20 puppies/dogs per year (whichever number is greater); and in New York you are a pet dealer if you sell 9 puppies/dogs per year) to be licensed and you have a right to see this license or to get the number so you can verify it with the state. So if a breeder tells you he or she is a “licensed breeder,” make sure you verify that if he or she meets the requirements for state licensing, he or she really is licensed with the state and not just his or her own

breed organization. **It is important to note, however, that just because a breeder lives in a state that does not have laws regarding pet purchases or pet dealers, it should not mean that you view this as a negative reflection on**

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that breeder. Most states do not have laws governing the average hobby breeder. Each state, as you can see from the above links, takes a different approach to laws regarding pets (and some states find no approach works best for them). The best indicator of an ethical breeder, with or without applicable state laws, is the results of the research you conduct on that breeder or breeders.

2.17 Deposit and Purchase Price: Is a deposit required and if so, how much? Is the deposit refundable or will it be moved to a mutually agreed upon litter if you do not find a puppy that meets your criteria? I prefer a refundable deposit because many times a good hobby breeder only has one or two litters a year. I could have a long wait to find a "mutually agreed upon" litter. This is very important because until the litter evaluation is completed, there is no way to know if there is a puppy that meets my criteria. In addition, is the purchase price in your range (prices of Shiloh puppies vary)? What exactly are you getting for your money (guarantees)?

2.18 Buyer Responsibilities: What are your responsibilities as a buyer and can you honor them? Good breeders depend on their customers for littermate information (health and temperament data). If you buy a puppy, you agree to provide this information to help them improve their breeding programs. We expect breeders to uphold their end of the contract—we should also expect customers to uphold their end of the deal and provide the data as outlined in the contract. In addition, if you are purchasing a breed quality puppy on a co-own or breeder's agreement and the puppy passes all the tests required for breeding, are you willing to breed the dog? Are you prepared for the work and responsibilities involved in raising a litter of puppies? These agreements often require you to give a certain number of puppies (or the sales price) back to the breeder. This is not always about more money for the breeder although one does have to consider exactly how expensive one thinks a dog should be. It is often critical to improving the lines for some hobby breeders who cannot keep a large number of dogs on the premises.



2.19 Clarity and Fairness: Another important issue with contracts is to ensure you and the breeder communicate clearly about the contents of the contract. This aspect should be dealt with long before any deposit is put down. Does the contract have provisions that are fair and equal for both parties and does it meet any applicable State Puppy Lemon Laws. If not, you may need to negotiate some of the clauses to better fit both your needs. The contract should be detailed enough so that if a problem occurs, both buyer and breeder understand exactly what the terms will be and how they will be executed. Think of this part this way--if you had to go to court, would the judge be able to look at the contract and say "the verbiage is clear in this document-I find in favor of the plaintiff/defendant (whichever you are). And could you provide evidence to support your case?

Look to see if the contract is fair to both breeder and buyer? Are there options if problems arise? For example, if the clause is not already covered by a State Lemon Law, is your only option a replacement puppy? What if you buy a show/breed quality puppy and it develops a serious problem covered in your contract? You may not want another puppy--you may need a refund (or partial refund) to deal with medical problems--is that an option? Do you have the option to get a portion of the price back if you want a cash refund (be it for show/breed or pet). I say this because at the \$800 to \$1,500 price range for pet quality, even a pet diagnosed with any of the major health issues listed previously is not "what you paid for." In my opinion, an ethical breeder acknowledges this. Or is the option available to you to work a deal with the breeder that says the breeder will pay you a full or partial refund in cash as soon as the next litter is on the ground and he or she sells some puppies. I like to see options available in contracts.



2.20 Clauses and Operational Definitions: One of the most important aspects of a contract is the verbiage that takes affect if something goes wrong. I recommend you run from what I call "smoke and mirror" clauses. These are clauses such as "no cash refunds period." Or "a full refund only if the puppy is returned." Or "no replacement puppy will be

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provided unless receipts for a (laundry) list of items is provided." These are clauses designed to make it next to impossible to invoke a clause in the contract when a problem occurs due to emotional or financial reasons. In addition, there are clauses that set up an unfair burden on the buyer such as "unlimited breeding rights" when a male puppy is purchased.

You want the contract to clearly define the issues and answer "what if" questions. Are all aspects of the contract clear and understandable to both parties--are there operational definitions for all invocable clauses? For example: What is the



operational definition of hip dysplasia (HD)? Is it a diagnosis from OFA or PennHIP, from the buyer's vet, or from the breeder's vet? Are you required to submit X-rays to the breeder? Are you required to return your puppy if it is diagnosed with HD (or any other ailment) before the clause can be invoked? Do you have options such as a full refund, a refund down to pet quality, or replacement puppy from a mutually agreed upon litter? Is the clause different if you are buying a pet quality versus a breed or show quality puppy? Most importantly, are there any clauses in the contract that you feel you need to renegotiate? Is the breeder amenable to renegotiating them with you?

In addition, look for hidden expenses--make sure you lock in the purchase price and it does not go up once the litter is on the ground. Ensure you have a refundable deposit if you do not find a puppy that fits your criteria after the LE is conducted. Be clear about the picking order and what it requires or entails. Do you have first pick of all puppies, show quality puppies only, or pet quality puppies only? Or is it gender based—you have first pick of the males? If temperament is your critical criteria, the more options you leave yourself open to, the more chances you have of finding the "best match" for you and your family. And on that note, hopefully color is not at the top of your list of criteria! You can find a great synopsis of contract issues here:

<http://www.lightningridgeshilohs.com/contracts.htm>

Registries:

There are currently six Shiloh Shepherd Registries:

ISSR: <http://www.shilohshepherds.org/issr,inc.htm>

NSBR: <http://www.shilohregistry.com/>

SSBA: <http://www.shilohshepherd.org/>

TSSR: <http://www.shilohshepherdtsr.com>

ARBA: <http://www.arba.org/> and NKC: <http://www.nationalkennelclub.com/>
register litters when the parents are registered with them.



They each have their own rules and regulations regarding puppy/litter registration. Some allow dual registration meaning you can buy a puppy from a litter registered with Registry A and still register the puppy with Registry B. Some do not allow dual registration. Some only allow you to buy from breeders associated with a particular registry and dog club. If this is important to you, you will need to ensure you are buying from a breeder approved by the registry/club you are interested in joining.

It is important to remember that not all breeders are going to meet all the "standards" I have listed. That is where the compromise part comes in and only you can decide how much you are willing to compromise when it comes to spending \$800 to \$3,000 for an 8-week-old puppy.

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