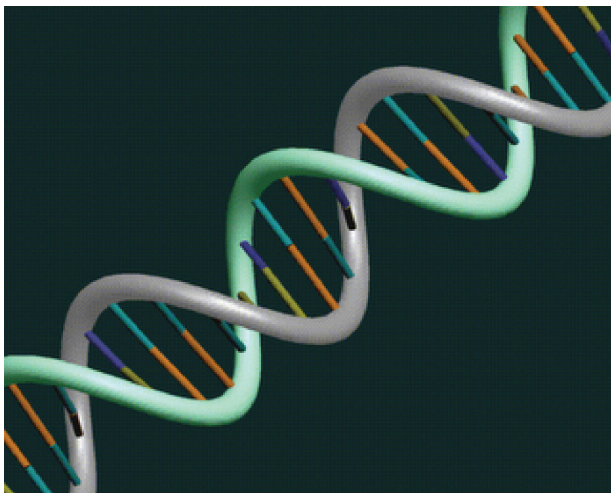


consistently produced top quality offspring. This is an indicator that the dog possesses "dominant" genes and is prepotent for passing the desired traits to the next generations.

A good breeder will have at least a working knowledge of genetics. While they may not be a geneticist they should have a basic understanding of Gregor Mendel's findings which show that there is a reliable method of inheritance that can be predicted with some level of accuracy. Mendel discovered through his research studies that "genes" are located in the chromosomes and that the genes determine the characteristics inherited. The genetic make-up determines all of the traits of the animal such as gender, size, structure, eye color, coat, ear set, tail set, etc. The genes not only determine physical characteristics but also temperamental characteristics. This is why you must know what is in the genes when deciding from which litter you will purchase your pup. The genes are present in pairs with one coming from the father and one coming from the mother. There are 39 pairs of chromosomes which account for the 78 total chromosomes found in each canine specimen with half of each pair being received from both the father and mother.



*DNA*



*DNA String*

While the parents contribute an equal number of genes to their offspring the genes themselves are not all "equal". Genes that expressed themselves in the offspring are called "dominant" and genes that remain hidden are called "recessive". Another advantage of line breeding is that it reveals what recessive genes are hidden away in a dog so that you can introduce new traits through an out crossed breeding later and improve the bloodline.

Though the study of pedigrees, and the dogs contained therein is an important part of choosing a litter, it is not the only factor involved. The parents should have proven themselves to be correct to the standard through conformation examinations as well as temperament testing. Just because the grandparents were proven show and working dogs does not mean that the sire and dam of the litter also have those same qualities. The purpose of trials and shows is to prove those qualities. While a person may choose to get a puppy from untitled parents, one compromise that no puppy buyer ought to ever compromise on is in the area of health certifications. One should always demand proof of hip certifications on both the sire and dam of the prospective litter. The minimum health requirement for a pair of breeding dogs is that they have a passing grade in regards to Hip Dysplasia. It is also recommended that they have health clearances for their elbows and hearts.

When you go to evaluate a potential litter be sure to examine the litter's living quarters to make sure it is clean. Check each individual pup's ears, eyes, nostrils, mouth, genitals, umbilical area, coat and feet. Ears should be clear of yeast or any signs of mites. Eyes should be clear and bright. Nostrils and genitals should be clear of any discharge. Look for umbilical hernias. Rub the coat against the grain and look for dry flakes. Observe gums for pale color which could be indication of internal parasites. Check for fleas and ticks. The litter should be clean, confident and energetic. By 6 weeks of age they should come to you and not cry when handled. Shy and whimpering pups have not been socialized very well and probably should be avoided. The pups should nip at your feet when walking and mouth at your hands when petting. In addition, the breeder should be able to provide you with a record of puppy vaccines and regular wormings.

Another key consideration is the consistency within the litter. This will tell you something about the gene pool they have received. It is also advisable to see older brothers and sisters if possible. One of the surest ways of evaluating a litter is if it comes from a repeat breeding. If the breeding "clicked" the first time then chances are highly favorable that it will work well again.

Finally, it is preferable that the litter be marked with a form of permanent identification. They should be either tattooed or micro chipped and preferably both. It is also highly recommended that you search for litters produced by dogs that have been DNA analyzed and have the sample on record. Then, always collect a DNA sample from your pup to submit and authenticate parentage.



Don't miss our next Newbies' News Article entitled "Choosing a Puppy: Which One is Right for Me?"