

Purebred Vs Crossbred and The Truth about Registered Dogs

By Brenda Howard

pure-bred *adjective* Date:1852 - bred from members of a recognized breed, strain, or kind without admixture of other blood over many generations

hy-brid *noun* Etymology: Latin Date:1601 - 1: an offspring of two animals or plants of different races, breeds, varieties, species, or genera

cross-breed *verb* Inflected Form(s): **cross-bred**; **cross-breed-ing** Date: 1675 *transitive verb*: hybridize, cross; especially : to cross (two varieties or breeds) within the same species

OH MY. What does it all mean? Is a pure bred dog any better than a mixed breed and is a mixed breed the same as a cross breed and is a mutt a crossbreed?

A pure bred dog is a dog that has a pedigree – which is documentation of its family tree. Purebred dogs have a genetic history that spans over many years – sometimes over hundreds of years. Purebred dogs have a written description of the breed’s characteristics. Purebred dogs are predictable in both their temperaments and outward appearance.

Take the Poodle for example. The Poodle is believed to have originated in Germany (where it is known as the Pudel) as a sporting dog – a water retriever. Drawings by the German artist, Albrecht Durer, establish the breed in the 15th and 16th centuries. In time it became popular with the French and today the Poodle is loved by people all over the world. The breed was recognized by the American Kennel Club (AKC) in 1887.

The Poodle is the only recognized AKC breed that comes in three sizes; the Standard Poodle is over 15 inches tall at the shoulder; Miniature is over 10 but under 15 inches; Toy is 10 inches or under. The term “tea cup” is not used by breed aficionados and is not correct. In AKC conformation competition Poodles are found in the Non-Sporting Group (Standard and Miniature) and Toy Groups.

Poodles of all three sizes have very exact written descriptions – the Breed Standard. This Standard is the guide for breeders. The Standard details each feature of the breed and also outlines the features that would be considered “faults” for disqualifying the Poodle in the show ring.

In the past few years mixed breed dogs have become quite popular. Also known as “Designer” dogs, mixed breed dogs are the offspring of two different breeds. If for instance the parents are a Standard Poodle and a Standard Schnauzer, the offspring might be called “Shnoodles.” This “Shnoodle” might make a wonderful family dog, however it cannot be predicted with any accuracy what genetic characteristics the dog will possess. This dog might have curly hair, or it might not. It might have the “terrier” type qualities of the Schnauzer or the retriever personality of its Poodle parent. Because the resulting dogs are not predictable in temperament and looks, they are crossbreeds. The unpredictability of these types of pairings is the chief problem with producing designer dogs.

A mutt is truly a “Heinz 57” with a family history not limited to two

breeds. These dogs are hard to predict in terms of temperament, or personality traits. They can make wonderful companion dogs, but there is just no knowing how large or small or feisty or laid back they will be as adults! Persons familiar with many breed types can sometimes guess as to the primary source of a mutt’s genetic background, but it’s truly a guess.

The registration of dogs is done by organizations promoting dog sports. The United Kennel Club (UKC) and the American Kennel Club (AKC) are the most respected and well known of these organizations. These organizations record each dog registered within their prospective breeds. Not all breeds are recognized and therefore eligible for registration by the UKC and AKC. Crossbreeds are not eligible for registration.

A registration is NOT a seal of approval, nor a stamp of quality. It is simply a number used to access the dog’s pedigree within the registering entity. Sadly, there are many uninformed people who breed dogs simply because they are “registered.” These dogs are purebred, but may not conform to the breed standard. Unless the breeder has done their homework, shown their dog in breed competition, and performed health screenings to determine the overall good health of the dam and sire, the offspring may not be of high quality.

Regarding health as it pertains to purebred dogs – there is no medical or scientific evidence to support the notion that purebred dogs possess more health problems than mutts or crossbreeds. The fact is that the data on purebred dogs is deeper and richer because of the passion of breed fanciers who make it their goal to breed better dogs. These individuals spend a great deal of time, money and effort in studying and pre-screening their dogs prior to breeding. Good breeders are honest about the known health issues in their breed and work to avoid or eradicate them. The result is that there is far more known about the various maladies and health problems within purebred populations than in the general population of dogs. Mutts and crossbreed dogs have generally not had that type of scrutiny regarding health issues. Texas A&M Veterinary School confirms that ANY dog may suffer from bloat and torsion, hypothyroidism, diabetes, epilepsy, hip dysplasia, heart issues and that these problems are not limited to purebred dogs.

Beware of the breeder who cannot demonstrate a deep understanding of their purebred dog’s pedigree and health history. Remember that the cute designer name (i.e. Labradoodle, Yorkypoo, Pekepoo) is no predictor of the temperament, size, quality or ultimate health of the dog – the offspring’s characteristics are not dependable. Mutts, like crossbreeds are not predictable, but can make great companion dogs too.

Brenda Howard has been training dogs for over 20 years and is a member of The Association of Pet Dog Trainers, The American Bloodhound Club, and The American Boarding Kennels Association.

Please consult your veterinarian regarding all issues relating to your dog’s health.

