

## Why Be Ethical? Is it the Breeder or the Buyer's Responsibility?

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*"A man is truly ethical only when he obeys the compulsion to help all life which he is able to assist, and shrinks from injuring anything that lives."  
Author: Albert Schweitzer*



When the subject of dog breeding is discussed there is, perhaps, no one word that comes up more often than "ethics". Ethics are relevant to all kinds of animal breeding, but it is probably more important when spoken of in terms of dogs than any other animal.

Our relationship with our dogs is unique in the entire animal world. Dogs are not livestock and neither are they independent companions. We tend to form a deep and lasting bond with dogs that transcends most relationships other than that between humans. (And sometimes it transcends even that.) So of all the things we might bring into our lives, our dogs require a unique degree of trust in those who provide them to us, and responsibility on the part of those who own them.

### Breeding to reasonable and ethical standards.

When breeders undertake to make breeding decisions, and the result is that we bring new lives into the world, we must be responsible for our decisions. We owe it to the dogs to establish and maintain high and reasonable ethical standards to ensure that we give them a chance at a good and healthy life. Since our responsibility begins in how we breed them, here are some of the basics that define an ethical Tibetan Mastiff breeder.

- ❖ **Because of the high value that most individuals place on the relationship with dogs, buyers want breeders to provide them with the finest, healthiest dog available.**

To breed healthy dogs, breeders must start with healthy dogs. We do appropriate and extensive health testing and weed out questionable breeding animals no matter how much we may want to include them. We never make or accept excuses for breeding dogs that are not healthy. While breeders cannot guarantee that every puppy will remain healthy, breeders can guarantee that we have done all that is humanly possible to ensure the health of that

dog. We can guarantee that if that dog proves to be genetically unhealthy, we will stand behind that dog with a replacement, a refund or some other mutually agreed upon remedy.

- ❖ Buyers want owners to be breeding only the "best" dogs so we should feel an obligation to choose those dogs. We don't use dogs in our breeding program just because we own them, or because they live nearby.
- ❖ Principled breeders do not accept "accidental breedings" or breeding immature Tibetan Mastiffs as the norm.
- ❖ We seek always to improve the breed by thinking of the good of individual dogs before we think of our own needs or our pocketbooks.

We don't breed Tibetan Mastiffs just to breed but have a goal in mind. That goal is NEVER just to make money. Puppy millers breed to make money; ethical Tibetan Mastiff breeders combine pedigrees and dogs to strengthen and improve the breed's gene pool.

A Tibetan Mastiff breeder's responsibility also extends to how we sell or place our puppies.

- ❖ We take a personal interest in where each puppy goes.

Potential owners need to be thoroughly screened to determine whether a Tibetan Mastiff is the appropriate breed for that person or family, their expectations, their potential home and lifestyle. It is our responsibility to ensure that homes are as good as we can find. Oftentimes it can mean that tough decisions are made and a breeder must be able to say "No."

- ❖ Should a sale or placement take place, we ensure that new owners are armed with all the help and information they will need.

Since this is a lifetime commitment, this phase lasts long after the check clears the bank. This commitment means that we are there to provide support, information and stand behind every dog we sell.

- ❖ If there are not readily available good homes, or healthy individuals to breed, it is our responsibility **NOT** to breed at all.

**Why a breeder should be searching for that "ethical" buyer.**

While I've pointed out some of the elements that help to define an ethical breeder, buyers need to realize that selling a dog to someone is a two-way street. It is a relationship between buyer and seller that is unlike most other retail relationships. With most commodities, purchasers who want a cheap item will pay less for it and expect less of it. But just as the potential owner is asking more of the breeder than merely providing a commodity, the Tibetan Mastiff breeders expects a higher degree of commitment from the buyer than from almost any other buyer/seller relationship.

- ❖ Aided by a knowledgeable breeder, it is the buyer's responsibility to honestly determine whether a Tibetan Mastiff will fit into one's lifestyle.

Choosing a dog and forcing it to live in a style inappropriate to its mental and physical needs is not ethical. This breed was developed over time to serve in a guardian capacity so looking

to buy a Tibetan Mastiff puppy because it is “pretty” or “big” are not adequate reasons for choosing this breed.

- ❖ It is the buyer who will bear the day-to-day responsibility for the dog, and the buyer must be willing, able and informed

The buyer has a further obligation to commit as the primary caregiver for the dog for the dog’s lifetime. The buyer owes it to the dog to provide for that animal appropriately and humanely, to consider that the dog is more than just a shiny new toy, to realize that this dog is a living and evolving being with daily needs.

**Why it matters that you BE an ethical buyer.**

- ❖ An ethical buyer plays an integral part in weeding out unethical breeders. By insisting to only work with and purchase from ethical breeders, buyers help to eliminate puppy millers and other unscrupulous breeders.

Ethical buyers support ethical breeders and they help all dogs to be happier and healthier by eliminating the market for poorly bred dogs. So long as there is a market for cheaply bred, inexpensive, mass produced dogs, there will be unethical people willing to breed and buy them. While ethical breeders do not contribute to this market, they cannot stop it. Only ethical buyers can. The reality is that no ethical breeders’ group can force a breeder to be ethical. No one can dictate to another how he or she must breed or keep their dogs. But if buyers refuse to buy from unethical breeders, they will go out of business and a great many dogs and peoples' lives will be better for it.

So why be ethical, either as a breeder or as a buyer? The simple reason is primarily for the dogs themselves. Since we as human beings each play our part in bringing Tibetan Mastiff puppies into the world and we are ultimately responsible for caring for them throughout their lives, it falls on both the buyer and the breeder to act in ethical ways toward those dogs and toward each other. It is a collaborative effort by both and, if well-suited, will result in a lifetime of joy for all involved.