

The Ethics of Dog Breeding



Dog Breeding

In 2015, the estimated population of dogs kept as pets in the UK was around 8.5 million.

There are many responsible and reputable dog breeders around the country. Charities and organisations, such as the **RSPCA** and **PDSA**, can offer advice on the best way to breed dogs and on buying a dog from a breeder.

Over the years, problems have been found with some of the processes involved in dog breeding. This has resulted in health problems and genetic defects within some dog breeds.

RSPCA – Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

PDSA – People's Dispensary for Sick Animals

Natural Selection

Thousands of years ago, before humans got involved, dog breeding was a perfectly natural process.

Natural selection - is a process that occurs naturally in the wild and among species of plants and animals. It means that a species will survive through selectively transferring the best genetic traits from one generation to the next. This improves that species' chances of survival.

What is Selective Breeding?

Selective Breeding – unlike natural selection involves human interference. Dogs are bred to intentionally alter their traits. This may include a dog being larger, smaller, stronger or having a different fur colour.



However, a problem with selective breeding is that it has had a detrimental effect on the health of many dogs.



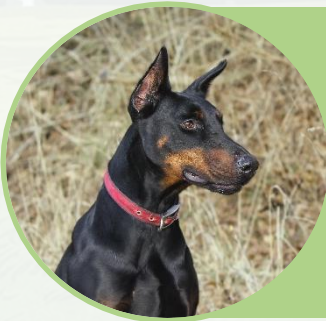
pedigree dog – a puppy bred from parents of the exact same breed with pure blood lines. This lineage can be proven by registration with 'The Pedigree Club', who keeps a record of pedigree dogs in the country.

What Problems Can Selective Breeding Cause?

Here are just some of the health problems that can occur in some of the most popular dog breeds due to selective breeding:



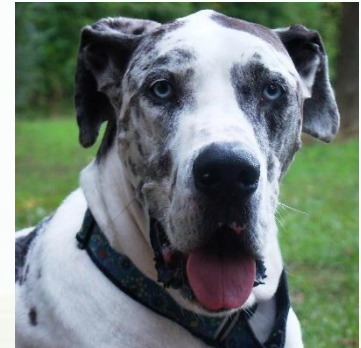
The Chinese Shar-pei has very loose skin, which is an unusual trait, that has been increasingly encouraged into their breed. They often suffer from skin infections as the loose folds in their skin make it easier for bacteria to grow.



Breeds such as Doberman Pinschers and Bassett Hounds now suffer from disorders that cause problems with their blood clotting. This means they bruise easily and bleed a lot from injuries.

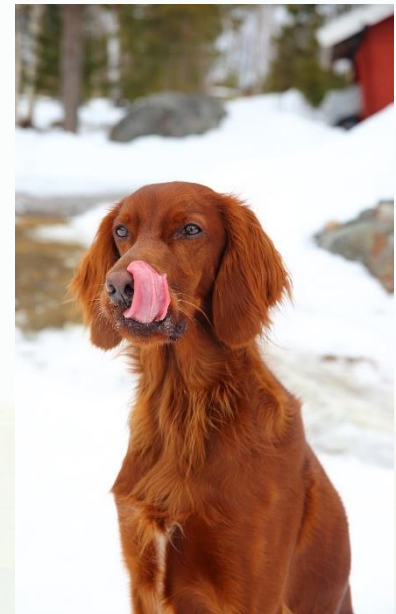
What Problems Can Selective Breeding Cause?

Some bigger dogs such as the Rottweilers, Labradors and Great Danes often now have health problems due to the fact that they are bred to be larger, taller and stronger than before. Dogs such as these are also more prone to cancer and tumours.



What Problems Can Selective Breeding Cause?

Dogs have excellent hearing and can actually hear better than humans. However, due to problems with selective breeding, breeds such as the Dalmatian and English Setter suffer from **hereditary** hearing loss.



What do you think the term '**hereditary**' means?

Small and Toy Dogs

There are plenty of great reasons to want a small dog! They often live longer than larger breeds, they eat less, are suitable for smaller homes and they can have great personalities.

However, some toy dogs like the Chihuahua, Bichon Frise and King Charles Spaniel have health problems with their windpipe as they are so small, with the tiny bones in the neck and sometimes, due to their small size, their skulls do not form properly.



What Are Teacup Dogs?

There is an argument for 'how small is too small?' when it comes to breeding small dogs. Is it worth the health problems a dog may have just to breed a really small animal?



The term 'teacup dogs' describes very small dogs, which have been bred specifically to be much smaller than usual. Often, this is done by breeding with two dogs who were weaker or smaller than the other puppies in their litter.

What Are Teacup Dogs?

These breeds often have health problems such as, low blood sugar, soft spots on their skulls, seizures and breathing problems.

Due to all the health concerns they may inherit and the fact that it is irresponsible to breed dogs this way, many animal charities and organisations are trying to prevent people from buying teacup dogs.



Cross Breeding

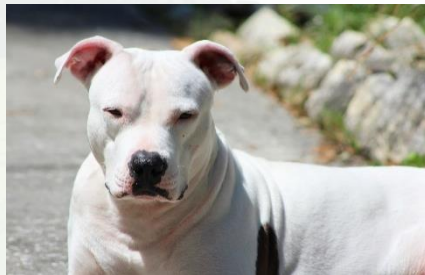
Over the last 200 – 300 years, farmers began to have problems as poachers were trespassing onto their land and were stealing their gamebirds and other animals.

Many farmers had dogs as guard dogs. A popular breed was the Mastiff – who were big, strong dogs, who were also good companions. However, they weren't all that aggressive and were not fast enough to catch the poachers.



Cross Breeding

The Bulldog, however, was fast and had lots of the traits of a good guard dog, but they were often not strong enough to catch the poachers and hold them down until the farmer could arrive.



What do you think they did?

Creating a Cross Breed



Mastiff – strong, not all that fast or aggressive but good companions.



Bulldog – fast with good guard dog traits but not as strong.



By breeding a Mastiff and a Bulldog, the breed 'Bull Mastiff' was created. They had the strength of a mastiff as well as the guard dog traits and speed of a bulldog. This is just one example of cross breeding. There are many more. Maybe you own one!

Responsible Dog Breeding

Although there are issues with some dog breeding, there are also many responsible dog breeders out there, who are extremely concerned about the welfare of the animals they produce and sell.

The RSPCA website offers lists of questions to ask a breeder if you are buying a dog. They can also give you information on what to look out for in a responsible breeder.

www.rspca.org.uk



twinkl