

PUPPY WARRANTIES. ARE THEY WORTH IT?

Breeders generally offer some type of written health warranty on the puppy you purchase and yes, there is always the “fine print” or the “stipulations”. Let’s face it, your purchasing a live animal. Dogs will get sick. It is inevitable. Any living breathing creature is subjected to pathogens, environmental influences and genetic issues. You cannot even equate a health warranty on a purebred dog to that of the Whirlpool washer you purchased six months ago. Most people realize that, however there are always a few we encounter that believes if a dog gets any ailment, it is the breeders fault.

There are many breeders that do not offer any warranty AT ALL. Nil, none, nada for whatever reason. Regardless, that is their call. Their dogs and your choice as a consumer to decide on that particular purchase with or without a warranty.

NO reputable breeder wants to have a puppy develop a health problem or get a phone call telling them that “Jake”, a puppy from their marvelous litter last fall is suspected to have Hip Dysplasia but it does happen and it’s just a matter of time before it happens again. Sometimes no matter how careful a breeder and new owner can be, things just happen. After-all, life is not perfect. These are living, breathing creatures. Expect maladies from time to time.

I wanted to explain to you basics of warranties, why they are there and the “fine print” so you get a much better understanding of why or why not a breeder offers certain warranties.

General Health at the time of sale. This is a post-sale warranty. They vary in duration. Some as short as 24 hours, others for a few days after the sale. Even though a breeder may have already had the puppy examined by his or her Vet, this generally allows you enough time to take your new puppy to a Veterinarian of your choice (second opinion) for a complete examination to make sure the pup is indeed healthy and free of disease and other health problems. A breeder may offer a refund or a replacement if the dog is unsound or reimbursement if medications were prescribed for minor and common things like coccidia or ear infections. Your Vet wants to see a CLEAN, healthy puppy. Alert, clear eyes. No discharge from nose/eyes. Pink Mucus membranes. Clean ears. Normal sounding tummy, heart and lungs. I advise people take your new puppy to the vet ASAP!! The SOONER THE BETTER!!! Nothing worse than someone waiting two weeks to have the puppy seen for the first time. By then who know what the new owner has “accidently” exposed the puppy too. WHO KNOWS if the puppy was fed correctly for two weeks or if the puppy chewed and swallowed a piece of plastic off the kids Little Tykes set? Some puppy owners not wanting to “admit to any guilt” of their own will stretch the truth a bit. Perhaps they tell the Vet the puppy was like this when they purchased them or they JUST got the pup yesterday when in fact they have

had the pup for 10 days. Ummm Hmmm. FOLKS....This is WHY breeders generally only allow the new owner a “short window” to get that puppy in for a well-check exam. Facts are either the puppy was healthy at the time of sale or not. Sometimes congenital abnormalities or hereditary conditions will never be spotted on a wellness exam and may not even manifest until later in life.

Speaking of Congenital. Some breeders may offer warranties against congenital defects. Basically a congenital defect is a condition present at birth (developed in Utero) but often times does not manifest itself until later. These are defects to the developing fetus, caused by environmental factors, chromosomal abnormalities, virus, etc.

Orthopedic Issues: The most common, the most misunderstood and taken advantage of warranty issue concerning purebred dogs. Just because your puppies parents have passed their Orthopedic Exams and are certified, does not mean your puppy will never develop a problem with his or her joints. What people want to hear and what is factual are two VERY DIFFERENT things. Let me make this clear. Joint Issues such a Canine Hip Dysplasia are POYGENIC which means it is controlled by many different genes but is also INFLUENCED by environment such as Obesity, early removal of growth hormones (spaying/neutering), stress to underdeveloped joints and ligaments associated with strenuous exercise before maturity, nutritional deficiencies and so forth.

There is no magic DNA test at this time that can say if your dog will develop CHD or not. X-rays are the only way to determine the hip joint status and x-rays are very subjective because not every Veterinarian reading the x-ray will have the same opinion and not every x-ray taken is done so with correct positioning. Therefore, you can make a dog with Good hips look like he has bad hips and a dog with poor hips look like he has good hips Basically, a dog certified OFA Excellent at two years of age, can still develop hip dysplasia later in life. So for what it’s worth, a breeder may in fact warranty your puppy to pass his/her OFA exams at two years, BUT chances are there are some “conditions” to that warranty such as not spaying or neutering before growth plate closer, keeping the dog from becoming overweight as a puppy, refraining from jogging or other “high impact” activities while growing.

A breeder is going to do all they can do to prevent their dogs from developing joint issues but once a puppy goes to live with someone else, the breeder has no control over how the dog is raised and by all means cannot do anything other than pray that new owner follows their advice. So if you are even lucky to get a hip warranty, better pay close attention to what it says. There is a increased chance YOU done something wrong (not intentionally) during your pup’s development which actually influenced or allowed the expression of CHD to manifest. If you want sound hips, start with a puppy from parents that are certified. (This is called (reducing the incidence of CHD through selective breeding) but it is only the FIRST step. Then

you have to really consider and weigh facts vs. fiction regarding feeding, exercise, spaying and neutering and how all these factors will either influence CHD or help prevent it. Lastly on this subject of Orthopedic Warranties. Your breeder really does not what to take just your Vets opinion. I know, I have heard how wonderful your Vet is, but you see, he is not MY vet. Would it be okay if you brought your dog to MY vet and then only considered what HE had to say? Bottom line, x-rays need to be submitted to the OFA for evaluation. I suggest ANYONE buying a puppy and asking for a hip warranty to understand that most breeders will require x-rays to be submitted to the OFA, especially if you do not understand orthopedic issues to begin with. The puppy buyer demands that breeder's do all that they can to prevent orthopedic problems, yet time and time again, the puppy buyer fails to follow up with the same protocols when faced with an issue. If I (the breeder) has to be stringent and follow certain guidelines and have their dogs screened by the OFA to get a rating or diagnosis, then so should you. If it were only as easy as accepting a Vet's word on a Hip X-ray then we would never have to certify hips through the OFA to begin with.

DNA testing for breed specific diseases: As with any breed, they are predisposition to certain PREVENTABLE genetic diseases. I find it simply amazing that we have these wonderful tools right at our fingertips and they are so affordable. I mean come on, why in this day and age, a breeder would NOT choose to do DNA testing is really concerning BUT yet there are many breeders still not doing DNA. Just being able to make better breeding decisions and preventing affected pups from being born is by all means a HUGE step forward. Basically if a breeder has done DNA testing and can provide you with a copy of the sire and dams results, that should in itself be all that you need to determine if your puppy is affected or not.

The low down on Heart Certifications and warranties. Most breeders certify hearts. Heart certification is just that, a certification. It means that the dog was examined by either a practitioner or a cardiologist and found FREE of known heart problems AT THAT TIME. Does it mean that a heart problem cannot crop up a year or even 6 years later? NO IT DOES NOT! All a breeder can do is have the Sire and Dam checked and only use "Cleared" individuals in their program. Similar to Orthopedic issues in nature, you can only "reduce the incidence" by breeding parents that do not have these disorders. But what happens if the parents are clear and one or more Offspring are affected? It's a learning curve for the breeder. The breeder just has to take steps next time to steer clear of breeding those two individuals (or within the same family lines) together again. They may wish to outcross into a different line next time. As for warranties, a breeder can offer a refund or replacement IF they so choose to even cover hearts.

Eye warranties. Most breeders offer you warranties for breed specific eye diseases such as cataracts, entropion and other inherited ocular disorders. Breeders SHOULD have each of their breeding dog's eyes checked yearly by a board certified ophthalmologist. Eyes disease may not show up until later in life. Eye warranties for the most part are just a matter of surgical reimbursement or refunds. Some breeders do not offer eye warranties at all simply because it is something they have to screen for yearly. There is just no way to predict if their dog will develop issues down the road.

Warranties are great and in place should something unexpected come about. I don't favor warranties that require you to return the dog in order to get another puppy or a refund. After all, you've probably fell in love with your dog, he has become a part of your family and there is just no way you're giving him back! I would never expect you to break that bond. So if warranties REQUIRE you to return the dog or else. You may want to just accept the fact that the warranty is no good or just go elsewhere. Don't expect the breeder to do cart wheels for you. They are only really obligated to either offer you a replacement or refund. The sky is NOT the limit. So if you get your puppy home and he develops a case of kennel cough in the first 72 hours and you spend \$250.00 at the Vet for an office visit, his first couple months of heartworm medication, oral antibiotics for the cough, a new squeaky toy and a 20 lb bag of Science Diet, please don't send the breeder your \$250.00 bill. Break the bill down and show charges for the Kennel Cough treatment not all the other "thrown in" items.

If it is NOT in writing, you have NO warranty. PERIOD!

Pay attention to the wording in your warranty. If you do not understand it, ask your breeder to explain. There are time limits, there are stipulations, and there are guidelines to follow. Miscommunications between Breeder and buyer can be avoided IF you take the time to READ your warranties.

Don't rely only on your warranties. They run out! Get health coverage for your pet. Low cost pet insurance is available and yes it is worth it. Just research companies and go with a plan and coverage that best suits your needs.

He's your dog! You're raising him, feeding him and providing everything he needs. A breeder can only offer you advice as to what has been proven successful in their programs and keeping their own dogs healthy. A breeder has no control over how you raise, socialize, feed and care for YOUR dog. If you choose not to take your Breeders advice or feel your dog should be a "Vegetarian" and never eat meat, don't expect that breeder to offer you compensation when your pet is hospitalized due to nutritional deficiencies.

IF your puppy gets sick. Please use some common sense. STAY OFF of internet forums and social media asking for advice. I cringe at some of the things I see people asking and the advice they get. Get your pup to your vet. Then if the issue concerns your warranty, contact

your breeder. AND PLEASE STOP blaming the breeders for every hiccup or sneeze the puppy has. The biggest pet peeve is that I get an EMAIL (not a phone call) but a lame email to inform me that the dog I sold them two years ago has developed a "BUMP" under the skin and their vet suggested we contact YOU to see if any of the others in the litter have developed "BUMPS". WTF!?!?! Gee, have a biopsy done and call me back. BUT just so you know, I do not warranty BUMPS!

The Ugly "C" word. CANCERS. Cancers are on the rise. PEOPLE WAKE UP! Cancer is not something a breeder can warranty. I have had so many calls and inquiries where someone is looking for a new pet after losing a dog to Cancer. And I hear the same thing over and over. "I want to get a dog from a different breeder that does not have Cancer in their lines". Sorry folks. You either have been very misinformed OR you just don't realize how Cancer works. Sure, there are some types of Cancers that can have a genetic predisposition BUT Cancer cells develop because of damage to cells. What damages cells? What we eat, what we expose our bodies to and how well we take care of ourselves can either keep Cancer at bay or feed it. SAME THING WITH DOGS! My recommendation is to stop feeding crappy kibble made from GMO's, by-products, and STARCHES. Watch WHAT you expose your dog to...Vaccines, flea/tick prevention, pesticides and herbicides, dog treats laced with heavy chemicals and preservatives. ALL these things damage cells. It is no wonder why our dogs live shorter life spans nowadays than 30 years ago.