

## **I'm A Professional Breeder (That's what I do)**

When vetting breeders, one can find numerous sites containing a list of questions to help the buyers distinguish good breeders from puppy mills. I don't mind the questions and I'm certainly interested in a family who takes the time to educate themselves. I am often asked those questions and ask the family if they want the truth or the politically correct answer. Many of the questions are good, helpful questions, but can lead to incorrect assumptions. Those questions include: How many litters a year do you have? How many litters has the mom had? What age do you breed them?

Truth is, I am a professional breeder. That is what I do – I breed dogs. What separates me from some breeders and certainly puppy mills is my ethics, love of the breed, time and money spent to ensure the health of mom and pups, the vetting process/guarantee given each family, and availability for the lifetime of the puppy. My definition of a puppy mill is somebody who spends the least amount of time, money and effort for the most amount of gain. Some “professional” breeders fall into my definition, while others are more obviously in that category. Then there are those that are neither puppy mill or professional breeders. They are the family who love their dog and love having puppies. Their heart is in the right place, but they don't educate themselves on the breed (or aware of the health issues) or pedigrees, don't have a guarantee, and not there for the buyer for the lifetime of the puppy.

I study the health issues in the breed. I am a constant student of the breed, structure, temperament, health, and reproduction. With that said, my answer to the questions many have are as follows:

- I can have 1 to 3 litters a year. My decisions are based on the age/health of the dam, the health testing, etc., and the dams always dictate my schedule. Yes, I try to cycle the litters, but sometimes a breeding doesn't take and the dam is getting older, so I try again. Shortly after my up-and-coming dog is fully health tested and in season and it is her cycle to be bred. A breeder can have multiple breedings, but that doesn't necessarily mean they have multiple litters. Other dams may be part of a foster program and the family who cares for the dam wants to complete their contract and not have the breeding postponed multiple times. I could fill a page with various factors that determine who is bred and when. A breeding program is full of moving components and therefore difficult to predict. I do not put myself in a box because a decision wouldn't be politically correct.
- How many litters and age of the mom is not set by political correctness. There is no set answer for any of the dams in our breeding program. The answer is based on multiple factors: health, age, easy whelping, motherly instincts, just to name a few. Some dams are perfect specimens but may have difficulty getting pregnant or whelping. In some cases, that dam may only have 1 litter. Then there are dams that are easily bred, easy whelpers, produce healthy, beautiful puppies, great moms and bounce back to show condition. There is no reason not to have multiple litters. Reproductive experts disagree with the political norms. Experts will tell you to breed them young, breed them back to back to back if they meet the requirements. Science proves dams not bred when they are in season are at risk of pyometra and other reproductive issues. A pregnant uterus is a healthy uterus. Science proves we risk the health of our breed stock dams when we don't breed them.

As a breeder, trying to balance the health of our girls and keep within social norms can be tricky. I am a breeder. That's what I do.