

Rescue and Shelter Dogs: Rough Draft


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Dog's are important members of many families, especially since they live for many years and can be with children from childhood all the way through until they become adults. People without children also enjoy having dogs in their lives as surrogates for the parent-child relationship. There are many ways to obtain a dog in America nowadays. First, there is pet stores. Second there are licensed breeders. Then there are unlicensed or home breeders. There are also many shelters and rescue organizations that take care of homeless or unwanted pets until they're forever family can be found. Due to the pet overpopulation in America and the exacerbated medical ramifications of selective breeding, people should adopt rescued dogs rather than purchase a puppy from any type of breeder or pet store. 


Pet overpopulation in America is causing environmental and sociological problems. Pet waste left behind by unsupervised and/or homeless animals have an impact on ground water quality (Paterson, 2011).  If pet waste is left on the ground, it seeps into the ground, gets washed into storm drains, makes its way into streams and lakes, and is left as untreated sewage in the natural water cycle. Rescue organizations reduce the pet population in America by spaying and neutering all animals before they are released. There were 3,500 individual animal shelters operating at capacity in the United States in the mid 1990s (Motavalli, 1995). This is a large number that has only increased over the years. The numbers grow because too many pets are allowed to breed freely without control. According to environmentalist Jim Motavalli (1995), the average female dog can produce two litters a year, which means that one un-spayed girl dog can be responsible for 67,000 births during her fertile years if her offspring are also left intact and not spayed or neutered. 


Designer and purebred dogs are created by artificial genetic modification through selective breeding practices. Since humans have selectively bred dogs for physical and behavioral characteristics through inbreeding, pedigree dogs can be plagued by genetic disease (Farrell, Schoenebeck, Wiener, Clements, & Summers, 2015). Breeders who work in commercial enterprises are focused on those physical characteristics when breeding an animal for sale.


 Selective breeding practices result in exacerbated medical conditions in canines.

Previously, breed standards were focused on aesthetics and temperament with disregard for health, leading to increased medical issues in pedigree dogs. Indrebø (2008) found that it will take “several generations to change the breed through genetic selection in order to eradicate the unhealthy over-typed dogs” (pp. 1-2). Shelters and rescue organizations do not participate in selective breeding for designer or purebred animals. Instead, rescue organizations accept animals in any variety until a permanent home can be found.

 Rescue organizations do not participate in selective breeding for designer or purebred animals. Pet stores, however, are supplied by breeders who do participate in selective breeding but do not take the steps necessary to ensure healthy pets. The only way breeders can ethically create healthy litters is through ongoing diagnostic screening of all dogs along with genetic testing regardless of arbitrarily chosen aesthetics of the animal (Farrell et al., 2015). There are ten recommendations for ethical breeding programs that require all breeders to only breed very healthy dogs, calculate percentages for breeding stock, limit “matador breeding,” exclude female dogs who are unable to give birth naturally, screen for polygenetic diseases, conduct DNA testing, and practice natural puppy-rearing with birth mothers (Indrebø, 2008). Without firm regulations and legal ramifications, commercial breeders continue to breed animals without regard for health and welfare. 

 There is a rich history in dog breeding and Kennel Club registration. Some people feel that pedigree dogs represent a cultural history. It has been found, however, that desire for a pure-bred dog may be based upon popular culture trends rather than more rational or logical decision-making processes (Ghirlanda, Acerbi, & Herzog, 2014). **Therefore**, it is important to look into the actual cultural impact of dog breeding as an asset to society without regard for ethical treatment of animals.

 Just as there is no assurance of breed when adopting from a shelter or rescue group, there is no guarantee of a healthy pet when adopted from a shelter where the animal's history is unknown. While it's true that there is no guarantee of health when a pet is adopted from a shelter, it is not financially supporting breeders who are breeding animals with disregard for health and welfare. This has led a number of municipalities across the country to ban the sale of puppy-mill animals due to the animal welfare concerns **(Taylor, 2015)**. Purebred dogs suffer needlessly and genetic diversity, as exhibited in mutts from the pound, is preferable for a healthy and stable pet (Jeppsson, 2014). So while there are no guarantees, the overall impact of adopting pets rather than investing in commercial breeding is positive.

The sale of commercially-bred puppies from pet stores should be banned unless all ethical recommendations become legally mandatory. In the meantime, many mixed-breed dogs  in shelters are in need of homes. Therefore, families should first consider adopting a dog from a shelter or rescue organization rather than purchasing a puppy from an unregulated commercial enterprise like a pet store or large breeding enterprise.





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