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No Christmas puppy, reason No. 9

Most people seem to think that purebred dogs are like DVD players -- if you buy a certain "brand" one is the same as another. One AKC golden is just as good as any other AKC golden, or indeed the same as any golden "with papers" or just plain "purebred." Under this point of view, it doesn't matter where you buy your dog or how much you pay -- they're all the same, right, if all you're looking for is "just" a pet?

These people just couldn't be more wrong. If you want a purebred dog, you need to find a reputable breeder. That's because "papers" really don't matter: There are organizations that will issue papers on a pet rock as long as the check clears. Deal with casual, clueless or intentionally corner-cutting breeders and you won't be getting what you hope for: A dog of good health and temperament who is a good representative of the breed.

A reputable breeder isn't in it for the money, and so won't be looking to cut corners to maximize profit. Good breeders breed only good representatives of the breed, and they do it with an eye to improve the breed. They're breeding for "looks," yes, but also health and temperament. They spend a lot of money screening their dogs for congenital defects, and won't breed those dogs whose health or temperament is suspect.

Puppies are not allowed to "raise themselves" in a kennel or back yard. Reputable breeders know the importance of socialization, and work to give their youngsters gentle exposure to all sorts of new experiences.

And when it comes to placing their dogs, they don't sell to the first people who walk through the door with a check. They look to match puppy to home situation, and they aren't afraid to say no to someone who isn't right for the breed.

Breeding reputable is expensive, hard work.

Although you might find a reputable breeder with puppies available for Christmas, you're more likely not to. That's because reputable breeders don't time their breedings to maximize sales. And they look very closely at placements this time of year.

Look for a reputable breeder. Take your time, and make the right decision. The investment of time, expertise and money a reputable breeder makes in your pup will pay off for you, but only if you're dealing with the right breeder. [Here's more](#) on finding and choosing one.

Somewhere in all that would be reason No. 9: It takes time and a lot of phone calls to find a reputable breeder. When you have a Christmas deadline to work with, you're going to have to make compromises. Choosing a puppy is not the place to make compromises.