

Some Facts and Fallacies of Health and Animals

Libbye Miller, DVM

"Adorable mixed breeds" get cancer, epilepsy, allergies, heart disease, and Orthopedic problems just like purebreds. I see it every day in my veterinary practice, but mixed breed dogs aren't tracked like the purebreds so they have a reputation as "healthier" that is actually undeserved in many cases.



Veni Harlan photo

It is so sad that a lot of folks, including young veterinarians these days, buy into the "hybrid vigor" baloney. The vet schools have been infiltrated by the Animal Rights Extremists, who are teaching them this junk science in order to push their agenda.

All animals have a certain amount of genetic load, which is to say there is absolutely no animal without some genetic problem of some sort of another. Know anyone who wears glasses? Has allergies? Thyroid problems? Weak knees? Flat feet? A skin condition? Arthritis? A gap between their front teeth? These are all genetic imperfections.

No human is genetically "clean." Neither is any individual of any species on earth. So this idea that dogs should not be bred because they might have a genetic problem, and that breeders are somehow "evil" for breeding them, is ridiculous. Every single individual of every single species has at least a few genetic conditions.

To use PeTA's ("People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals") logic, all breeding of all kinds (including having human babies) should halt immediately. And to be honest, Ingrid Newkirk (the woman who founded PeTA) does believe exactly that. She thinks that humans should Become extinct, along with dogs, cats, etc. This ridiculous scenario is precisely what she would like to see happen.

So folks, if that is what you want...if you agree with Ingrid Newkirk's whacky views, send your hard earned money to PeTA. They will help to ensure you are not able to own a dog or cat or hamster or any other pet in the future. They will see to it that you can't eat meat or fish or eggs or any type of animal-based nutrition. They will work to shut down places like Sea World, the zoos, etc., so you cannot observe the many wonderful animals on the earth. Eventually, once they accomplish these things, they may turn their efforts to making it illegal for humans to procreate.

If you don't agree with their extremist views, wise up and start supporting those who truly do love, care for and enjoy interaction with other species here on our little blue planet.

The fanciers of the breeds, those you see exhibiting their dogs at Westminster and other dog shows, work very hard to eliminate serious genetic conditions. They screen their breeding stock with every available test. They research pedigrees before breeding into other lines, to check for similar clearances in those animals. They contribute money to research organizations to further the work being done to track down genetic problems. They contribute blood, cell samples, etc. from their own animals to help with DNA and genome studies. They have made great progress so far, and they continue to work hard at it.

Are there unethical breeders? Certainly, there are. Just as in any group of humans, you will find the good and the bad. United States VP Elect Joe Biden, for example, managed to find a not-so-good one when he got his new German Shepherd puppy. I don't know who did his research for him, but they obviously didn't do their homework if they were looking for a responsible breeder. Joe has the right to get his dog from whomever he wishes, but if he was trying to set an example of purchasing from a responsible hobby breeder he went off the track this time. That's too bad, but it was his choice.

Unfortunately, breeders like that may be a lot easier to find because of their high volume and high profile. If you are looking for a nice family pet from a breeder who will be there for you forever, you need to do due diligence. You won't get that from a pet store. You won't get that from the guy selling dogs out of his pickup truck in the WalMart parking lot. You won't get that support from a high-volume breeder, either. Yes, it takes a little more time and effort to find someone who really cares and does all the work to breed the healthiest, happiest puppies possible and then stands behind those puppies. This is a living being that will be part of your family, hopefully, for many years. Isn't it worth a bit of effort to find a breeder who will be there for you and that puppy forever?

And guess what? Shows like Westminster are a very valuable resource for finding breeders who do care and who use the best possible practices, as well as for learning more about the various breeds.