

# TIPS FOR BUYING A GREAT DANE

## *Introduction*

Buying a Great Dane should be done in the same manner as you would with any major purchase. . . research, compare quality and guarantees, ask questions, then make your decision!

The person wishing to add a family pet to their household needs and wants a Dane that has a stable temperament, is physically sound, and is healthy. The new Dane owner will also want assistance and support from his breeder and should expect to receive information on care, feeding, and training at the time of sale.

It is suggested that the pet home purchase their Dane from a breeder who adheres to the Great Dane Club of America's "Breeder's Code of Ethics." This code of ethics has established recommended guidelines for Dane breeders. The pet purchased from an established breeder will most likely be of better quality and well-cared for. Established breeders usually have a waiting list for their puppies and breed only on a limited basis.

This pamphlet was prepared to assist you in making a wise choice in your purchase of a Dane puppy.

## *Great Dane Facts*

~Great Danes come in six recognized colors; fawn, brindle, black, blue, mantle and harlequin. Any other color is a mismark. There is no such thing as "rare" colors in Danes.

~The average lifespan is between 7 and 10 years of age.

~A Great Dane makes a good pet for the home wanting a large, short-haired indoor breed. The breed is very people-oriented and has moderate exercise requirements.

~The breed was originally developed to hunt wild boar and to be an estate dog. Cropping originated to prevent tearing of the ears during the boar hunt.

~A male will eat about 8 to 12 cups of dry food a day. A female will eat about 6 to 10 cups per day

~Puppies should be feed a low protein food. Most experts do not recommend feeding a puppy food.

### *The Breeder*

A “breeder” is any person who does a breeding between two dogs that produces a litter. There are good, bad and indifferent breeders, puppy mills and casual/backyard breeders, reputable breeders and not-so-reputable breeders. It’s your decision who and where to purchase your Dane from. However, a bit of research and homework first will help you determine who’s the best person to get a puppy from.

As a generalization, usually a person very active in Great Danes will belong to at least one Dane club. Usually, most people who are active in Danes show either in obedience, conformation, or other canine sports. The Dane community is fairly small and we all know each other. You can always ask for references from the person you are considering purchasing a puppy from. In fact, if you have any questions about a breeder you should do that.

Is the person knowledgeable? Do they truly love the breed? Are they concerned where their puppies go? Or, do they simply want your money and to end the relationship when the check is cashed? Most breeders take an active interest in their puppies and want to keep in touch with their “puppy people.” Can they answer questions on the breed correctly? Do they represent their stock honestly? Beware of the pet breeder touting puppies as “show quality”—especially if they’ve never shown a dog! Do they discuss the pros and cons of Dane ownership, telling you the bad aspects of Dane ownership along with the good?

What are the surroundings like? Are the adult dogs kept clean, well fed, and taken care of? Is the kennel area clean, odor free and well built? If there is any question about the care of the adult dogs, you can probably assume the puppy care has also been lacking. There is no excuse for filthy surroundings except laziness!

What are the adult dogs like? Do they look like quality Great Danes? How do they act? Are they friendly and outgoing? Do they seem healthy and active? If the adult dogs look to be of questionable parentage or don't appeal to you, pass the puppies by. If you don't like the appearance or temperament of the parents, you probably will not be happy with the puppy. Pet puppies out of show stock are going to have a much better appearance than pet puppies out of mediocre or questionable stock. Even if you "just want a pet" you want it to look like a Great Dane!

### *The Parents*

I often hear "I only want a pet, not a show dog." When the purchaser realizes it costs just as much to raise a pet puppy as it does his show littermate, he'll understand why breeders cringe when they hear that. It somehow infers that the pet puppy isn't of the same caliber and has received less care and planning. This just isn't so! The difference between a pet quality puppy and a show quality puppy can be so small the novice may not be able to tell the difference.

First, the parents should be AKC registered. While this is not a guarantee of quality, it is your assurance that the dog is indeed a purebred. Also, I have yet to see a "breeder" producing unregistered dogs that are of any quality or are doing a good job! Both parents must have their AKC registration papers in order before breeding, or the puppies will not be eligible for registration. If there is any question, ask to see a copy of the registration on both parents before you buy.

The parents should be good examples of a Dane-meaning they should look like the breed they are representing! A few generations of poor quality breeding soon result in dogs that barely resemble the breed they're supposed to be. Parents should be a "normal" color (no white dogs with fawn spots!) and should have good, stable temperaments. They should be structurally sound and in good physical condition.

Concerned breeders also do a battery of pre-breeding health exams and tests. These tests are done to make sure the parents are not passing on any hereditary diseases to their puppies. At the very least, all breeding stock must have their hips x-rayed and OFA certified against hip dysplasia. While this crippling disease of the hip joint can be environmentally caused, it definitely has a hereditary factor. Breeders with high standards also check eyes against defects, test for normal thyroid, test for a bleeding disorder, and several other things. All breeding stock should also have a routine health check. Bitches should be current on vaccines, so they will pass immunity on to their puppies. They should also be parasite free. Both parents should be tested negative against brucellosis, a canine venereal disease. Better breeders will guarantee against certain health problems.

A puppy out of quality stock from health-cleared parents may be more expensive, but it's to your best interests to deal with breeders who do these important tests.

### *The Puppies*

Dane puppies should be happy and healthy. NEVER purchase a puppy that is shy or fearful. Properly raised puppies are "house raised" and have received plenty of socialization. Garage, barn or kennel raised puppies often lack in proper socialization and human contact. When making a sudden noise such as clapping, most puppies will stop, then happily come to investigate the sound. If the puppies skitter off into hiding, avoid the litter. Those puppies will have a hard time making good pets. Older puppies should receive plenty of individual human attention. Avoid older puppies that have been in a "pack" for some time and have not had any individual training or socialization.

The puppy should be kept as clean as possible. Puppies raised in dirty surroundings are often hard to housebreak and can be more prone to disease.

For proper social development, a puppy should never be allowed to leave the litter until at least 7 weeks of age.

Better breeders make sure their puppies have the proper vaccines and wormings for their age before they go into new homes. Any puppy 7 weeks of age or older should have at least one vaccine and have been wormed twice. Again, many of the better breeders will also provide the cropping as part of the price.

At time of sale, you should expect to receive the AKC registration, pedigree, information on diet and medical records, and know what, if any, guarantees your breeder is offering. Make sure all contracts are in writing.

Don't hesitate to ask for references; any established Dane person will be happy to provide them. Don't hesitate to make the sale contingent upon a clear health check from a veterinarian.

Be comfortable with the person you are buying your puppy from. You should feel they are honest, have the best interest of the breed at heart, and take pride in raising happy, healthy puppies. It should be obvious that they have the best interest of the puppies in mind, not just their pocketbook!

### *What Does It Mean*

- AKC Registered The puppy is eligible for registration with the American Kennel Club. Only puppies with AKC or CKC (Canadian Kennel Club, not to be confused with the Continental Kennel Club) registered parents can be registered. AKC registration is not a guarantee of quality, only that the dog is a purebred. New owners should be given the "blue slip" when they purchase their puppy.
- Champion Means the dog has fulfilled the requirements set by the AKC to receive a Championship award. Usually means the dog is a quality animal.
- CKC Registered The puppy is eligible for registration with the Canadian Kennel Club. Only puppies with AKC or CKC parents can be registered. Do not confuse with the Continental Kennel Club, which will "register" dogs who are unable to get AKC or CKC registrations.

- OFA Stands for Orthopedic Foundation for Animals. Consists of a panel of veterinarians who read hip x-rays of adult animals and rate them.
- X-Ray Clear Means the dog had his hips x-rayed but they were not certified by the OFA.
- CERF Means the dog has had his eyes certified against eye defects.

### REMEMBER!

- Ask for references if you have any questions about the breeder.
- Make the sale contingent upon a clear health check from a veterinarian.
- Get any agreements or guarantees in writing.
- Be sure the dogs are honestly represented.
- If the AKC “blue slip” is unavailable at time of sale, get copies of the parents registration forms.

Sites of interest:

[www.gdca.org](http://www.gdca.org)

Great Dane Club of Am.

[www.ginnie.com](http://www.ginnie.com)

Dane Links

Text by Georgia Hymmen

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