

# What It Means To Be A Responsible Breeder

by  
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May 18, 2005

**W**hen we first began talking about breeding Crusher, I was very excited and enthusiastic. We took our time filtering out our options and finally decided on acquiring our own female to breed him with. Daisy was the perfect match for our Crusher and I knew it from the first instance I saw her. Aside from having very similar markings as our Crusher, she offered a very contrasting personality to Crusher. As the time drew near for us to begin the process of breeding the two of them I began to feel a little nervous. To ease the tension I was feeling I began an intense research project using the Internet. As I perused through article after article about the process of breeding and whelping and then caring for and selling the puppies to loving homes, I realized that this was not really helping ease my nervousness as I had hoped! I was quite overwhelmed with most of the information I read. There were articles about health issues, physical hardships, character traits, and the list just went on and on. But I finally buckled down and convinced myself that this was something I could do.

**O**ne thing I read in quite a few articles that bothered me was the debates between "responsible breeders" and "puppy mills". I found myself trying to convince myself that we would fall into the "responsible breeders" category, but deep inside I always had my doubts. Through my email correspondence with Sandra during the couple of weeks before they welcomed Tucker, aka "puppy #7" from our first litter, into their loving family, I became more assured that we did not fall into the "puppy mill" category. But it wasn't until the past couple of weeks that I actually realized what it really meant to be a "responsible breeder". The weekend of May 7-8th, Mother's Day weekend to be exact, we faced our first real "responsible breeder" issue.

**T**hat weekend one of our adoptive parents was admitted to the hospital, leaving her puppy abandoned at home for many hours during the day until she could come back home. She asked us if we would go by and care for the puppy for her in the afternoons, and I assured her that that was a given and she needn't have even had to ask. The boys and I went to her home every afternoon to take both her dogs out for a little run in the yard and to do their business of course. We fed them and spent some time playing with them to help ease their uneasiness of missing their friend and companion. The day she finally returned home both dogs were very happy to see her and she was so grateful to us for helping her care for her beloved pets when she was unable to do so.

**T**he day after Billie was admitted to the hospital, Mother's Day, we got word from Chad that their puppy had got loose from their fenced backyard and we immediately began to assist in the search party. The boys on foot and me and Randy in our vehicles, we spent our Mother's Day combing the neighborhood for our lost "baby". The puppy was nowhere to be found. The next day, after tending to Billie's dogs, we again helped Chad put up signs throughout the neighborhood about the lost puppy. By this time it was evident that the puppy had not in fact "got loose" from the fenced back yard, but had been stolen from the yard as Chad had found a section in the chain link fence that had been bent upwards just high enough for a puppy to get through. Although little Daisy has still not yet been found, we are all still keeping our eyes open for her and praying that she will make it back to her loving family one day soon.

**T**hese events have helped me to know what it means to be a "responsible breeder". I know, we could've sat back and did nothing to help in these situations going on the fact that these puppies are no longer our responsibility. But that's not the case, as well it shouldn't be. As I talked to people about Chad's missing puppy, I kept repeating how important it was to me to find her because I had helped bring her into this world. That's when it finally hit me. That's what a "responsible breeder" feels after the breeding, after the whelping, after the caring for and selling all the little pups. A part of you still thinks of them as your own little babies. It breaks my heart every day to wonder about our poor little Daisy, Jr., but as we continue our plans for a future breeding of Crusher and Daisy I feel more at ease today in knowing that we are and always will be "responsible breeders".

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