

## **QUESTIONS TO ASK OF/ABOUT A BREEDER...**

**What did you find out about this breeder? Responsible breeders usually breed only when they have a waiting list of buyers and don't need to advertise in newspapers, the internet or put a sign in the yard.**

**How often is the dam bred? Breeding every heat cycle IS TOO OFTEN and may indicate that profit is the primary motive for the breeding.**

**Is the breeder willing to provide you with references and telephone numbers of other people who have purchased his/her puppies?**

**Will the puppy have a limited registration (which means that if the dog is bred, the puppies cannot be AKC registered) with a mandatory spay/neuter contract? A breeder who cares enough about the breed to insist on these for a pet puppy is probably a responsible breeder.**

**On what basis was the sire chosen? If the answer is "because he lives right down the street" or "because he is really sweet," it may be that sufficient thought was not put into the breeding.**

**How long has the breeder been breeding Shih Tzu? Does he trace health problems in the dogs he sells? If he is new to the breed, has he carefully researched the genetic problems that may lurk in the background of his lines?**

**Will the breeder take the dog back at any time, for any reason, if you cannot keep it? This is the hallmark of responsible breeding (and the quickest, best way to make rescue obsolete).**

**Will the breeder be available for the life of the dog to answer any questions you might have? Is this someone you would feel comfortable asking any type of question? If you feel intimidated or pressured, keep looking!**

**Is the breeder knowledgeable about the breed? Does she/he represent his dogs as honestly as possible and try to assist the serious novice in his understanding of the breed? Is he/she involved in competition (conformation, obedience, agility)?**

**Responsible breeders try to breed dogs as close as possible to the breed standard. They do not sell puppies to pet shops or commercial pet mill establishments, donate puppies for raffles or auctions, crossbreed or sell crossbred puppies or give stud service to unregistered bitches.**

**Are there a majority of titled dogs (the initials CH, CD, BIS, BISS, etc. before or after the names) in the first two generations? The term "champion lines" means nothing if those titles are back three or more generations or if there are only one or two in the whole pedigree. Remember that all champions are not created equal, and a champion may not produce quality puppies.**

**Are the puppies sire and dam available for you to meet? If the sire is unavailable can you call his owners or people who have his puppies to ask about temperament or health problems? You should be provided with picture or videos, also.**

**Have the puppies been raised in the home?**

**Is the breeder knowledgeable about raising puppies, critical neonatal periods and proper socialization techniques? Puppies require high exposure to gentle handling, human contact, and a wide variety of noises an experience, and should not be removed from their dam or litter mates before 8 weeks of age. (The ASTC Code of Ethics suggests puppies not be sold before 12 weeks.)**

**Does the breeder provide a 3-5 generation pedigree, a complete health record, and material to help you with feeding, grooming, training, and housebreaking?**

**Does the breeder advise you to have the puppy checked by a veterinarian within 2 days (48 hours) of sale, with additional time allowed if the puppy is sold on a Saturday or Sunday, and provide a written agreement to refund the purchase price or take the puppy back and replace it if it is found to be unfit by a vet? Has the puppy received the necessary immunizations and been checked for parasites and treated if necessary? Is the breeder knowledgeable about and working to control and/or eradicate conditions, including those that are particular to the breed? For more information about health problems in Shih Tzu, go to Health.**

**Have the puppies' temperaments been evaluated and can the breeder guide you to the puppy that will best suit your lifestyle? A very shy puppy will not do well in a noisy household with small children, just as a very dominant puppy won't flourish in a sedate, senior citizen household. A caring breeder will know the puppies and be able to help you make a good match.**

**Do the puppies seem healthy, with no discharge from eyes, or nose, no loose stools, no foul smelling ears? Are their coats soft, full and clean? Do they have plenty of energy when awake yet calm don easily when gently stroked? If the puppy is in good weight, a slight clear nasal discharge may be do to pinched nostrils, quite common during the teething phase. They generally open as the puppy matures. Small umbilical hernias almost always close with age.**

**Does the breeder have one or at most two breeds of dogs and only one litter at a time? If there are several breeds of dogs, the breeder may not devote the time it takes to become really knowledgeable about our breed. If there are several litters at a time, it is very difficult to give the puppies the attention they need and may indicate that the primary purpose for breeding is profit, rather than a sincere desire to sustain and improve the breed.**

**Does the breeder belong to the American Shih Tzu Club (ASTC) and/or a local Shih Tzu club and abide by the ASTC Code of Ethics?**