

SELLING DOGS OVERSEAS

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There has been a lot of activity over the past several years of breeders selling their dogs overseas but it has been done quietly for even longer with prominent kennel prefixes showing up in many countries. Presently, since the tremendous popularity of our breed, many more of us are being contacted and encouraged to sell our Labradors. The motivation to do this is a mystery to me but I'm not so sure it isn't just about plain old money. Our devotion and sense of responsibility should pre-determine any other reasons to sell a dog to a totally unknown person merely because they can afford to offer the right price.

An additional concern even more so than selling a dog under such circumstances, is the puppies that are produced and what becomes of them as a result of our action. When we judge anywhere, we see only the cream of the crop. We're only exposed to the successful breeders, the best dogs, the fancy rigs, the lovely estates and the 5-star restaurants. Everyone who judges outside of our borders raves about the beauty and hospitality offered to them. More often than not it is done graciously and sincerely with no thought of any gain whatsoever. It's what's behind the scenes in some areas of the world that makes me question placing dogs outside the US. Many foreign countries have cultures similar to ours. They are avid animal enthusiasts like ourselves, exhibiting love and devotion to their pets and show dogs. In some cases; however, our cultures are very different and regard for both human and animal life is not the same as ours.

Breeders from some underdeveloped countries who are becoming interested in our breed are usually wealthy businessman who can well afford multiple kennel maids, security guards and the best available medical care for their pets. There are housekeepers, cooks and gardeners who protect, sweep, weed and prepare. When we read current show statistics from other countries we not only hear about the quality of canines that are examined in the show ring, but the social experiences the judges were treated to; sumptuous meals, elegant hotels and extravagant parties. The winning dogs are catered to with the best of available care, nourishment and exercise. The ones who don't win that coveted blue ribbon or can't get in whelp or don't successfully reproduce another Best in Show may be an entirely different story. Do they really live with auntie down the street on a feather-stuffed cushion or are they carelessly discarded among the poverty that sometimes exists?

It's exciting, fun and a big ego trip to be contacted by strangers saying that they have seen our dogs in magazines, on Facebook or websites and want to buy an adult for their breeding program or a puppy from our next litter. The money offered is always staggering. There are enough stories about breeders' experiences with overseas sales and leases to make me shy away from the thought altogether. There have been dogs who were leased outside the US for a year or more and when returned looking a shadow of their former selves. There have been dogs returned sterile. There was a dog shipped to an Eastern European country that was made to remain in a crate for three

days and at one point threatened with death as his paperwork had not been completed correctly by the former owner. New owners who find themselves with a losing dog are disappointed and may sell the dog to other parties, perhaps even to a lesser developed country than where the dogs already are.

Some Asian countries have “dog” on their menus. Fur farms are abundant and many have no rescue groups looking out for their dogs. There was the slaughter of canines in China over a rabies incident. I am sure those people loved their dogs, too, but their government demanded the dogs be destroyed. Conditions may be different, the value of life may be different and the regard for canine care may be different.

This is not to say that we don’t have our own problems here in the United States. We surely do, but we have many resources that enable us to rescue and protect our canines along with law enforcement agencies who aggressively monitor questionable situations as they arise. To casually send dogs to areas of the world that are not equipped to handle the future results of importing show stock is a mistake in my opinion. The dogs who become champions, who make their owners famous are most likely properly cared for, but what about the rest and their progeny?

It’s important that the breeders we sell to be identified as attempting to maintain high quality in the breed in their countries and not to sell to those who are simply on an ego trip to gain superiority in the breed. Research these potential buyers thoroughly. Vet your dog’s prospective home, thoroughly research the buyers reasons for purchasing an imported dog and be sure that he will be taken care of at least as well as you would want to do if not better. As always, a dog’s welfare should be our first priority and if in doubt or lacking sufficient information, keep your dogs close to home.

Faith Hyndman, Buckstone Labrador Retrievers
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