

New Year, New Dog

The winter might not seem a great time to add a canine companion to the family, but it's actually an *excellent* time for the new pup!

Pups seem to housebreak easier in the cold months, and there are more non-daylight hours when you are in the house, so there couldn't be a better time for you and your new gun dog to become a team. When the snow leaves and the grasses and cover grow, your pup will be able to negotiate the cover by the time October comes around, and you will have a pup that is 10-12 months of age.

When you decide to get a puppy, pick the breeder first. It is easy to pick your puppy out of a litter of 8 week-old pups, but before you go and look at the litter, make sure you've done your homework. The safest way to acquire a prospect that should turn out to be a proficient gun dog is to buy a pup only from someone who has hunting dogs that hunt. I have talked to many breeders who raise Brittanys, Labradors, German Shorthair Pointers, and English Setters who themselves have never held a shotgun, never mind hunted with these dogs.

Then consider the health of the puppy:

- 1. Have both parents been certified by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals?** This helps ensure that the dogs do not have hip dysplasia, a disease more prevalent in the larger breeds such as retrievers and large setters.
- 2. Have the eyes been checked for cataracts and certified against eye deformities?** This is important in Labradors.
- 3. Have the pups been examined by a licensed veterinarian and been given their first series of shots and wormed against parasites?**

In closing, I would ask for a written health guarantee against any of the things mentioned above. If the breeder is serious in his breeding practices, he or she will want you to be happy with a healthy animal.

John

at Kirby Mountain Sporting Dogs