

Selling Dogs Overseas

There has been lots of activity lately of Labrador breeders selling their dogs overseas but it has been done quietly for many years 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 dogs. I would like to say that the motivation to do such a thing is a mystery to me but I'm not so sure it isn't just 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, are 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. 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. 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 businessmen who can well afford multiple kennel maids, security guards and the best in 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 or on 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 returning, looking a shadow of their former selves. There have been dogs returned sterile. There has been a dog shipped to an Eastern 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 oftentimes sell the dog to other parties, perhaps even to lesser developed countries 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 recent 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 are different, the value of life is different, the regard for canine care is different and in some cases non-existent.

This is not to say that we don't have our own problems here in the United States. We surely do, but to casually send dogs to areas of the world that are not equipped to handle the future results of importing show stock (that will add to their canine population) 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 buyers thoroughly. Then do it repeatedly before selling out of the country. As always, a dog's welfare should be our first priority and if in doubt or lacking knowledge of the situation, keep your dogs close to home.

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