

Letter to Owners by Leslie Baumann

The person who should be helping you breed your Lhasas is the person or persons who bred them. There are no books or web sites that can replace the benefit of working with a good mentor. There is nothing more disheartening to me...someone who has bred and loved this breed for over 25 years...than to hear of folks embarking on the risky business of dog breeding without any understanding of what they are getting into.

Before she sold you a female for breeding, I hope that the breeder of your female told you that your male has at least an 80% chance of losing his housetraining if he is used for breeding. And you should know that the wonderful disposition that he now has can become more aggressive once the hormones really kick in. This is why responsible breeders keep few males and select for only the best in health, soundness and disposition. Generally, the dogs we use for breeding are AKC champions who have hip x-rays, stifle x-rays, and eye exams for PRA, KCS and early onset cataracts.

Your female should not be bred before she is two years old. If you allow her to be bred before then it is akin to a 13 year old girl having a baby. She is not emotionally nor physically mature enough to have puppies until she is all grown up herself. Your dogs don't know this...they may sneak off and try all sorts of tricks in order to reproduce...don't rely on belts or pads to prevent an unwanted breeding. If kept apart, both dogs are likely to be noisy and obnoxious...it is not fair to punish them for bad behavior coming from their sex drive.

I am the breeder referral contact for the American Lhasa Apso Club. The following paragraphs come from a standard email I send to people who are thinking about breeding their pets:

"My first, best advice is to contact the breeder of your female to get information about her pedigree, background, etc. Unfortunately, if you purchased your Lhasa from a pet shop or a backyard breeder, you may find that the breeder doesn't know very much...

"The reason it is important to learn as much as possible about your dog's background is that you need to know what sort of a risk you are running by breeding her. For instance, females spayed before their first season run a zero risk of breast cancer. Right now, for all you know, your Lhasa may be the only healthy puppy out of her litter or her parents' siblings may be suffering from serious health problems. Although your girl is normal, she may be carrying for health problems in her family. Renal Dysplasia is a fatal kidney disease in Lhasas that strikes puppies while they are growing and adult dogs under stress (such as being pregnant). There are no reliable tests to tell you if your dog is mildly affected by this disease since abnormal results do not show up until a dog has lost at least 50% kidney function.

"Besides renal dysplasia, a certain percentage of Lhasa females end up needing caesarian sections. Post-partem complications from uterine infections and eclampsia (milk fever) can be life-threatening. I always have money set aside for emergencies before I breed one of my girls. Pet Lhasas are particularly prone to whelping difficulties because they are so sensitive to their owners' stress. Lhasas that are pets will also sometimes abandon their puppies because they would rather be with their people. If the milk dries up, you are responsible for feeding hungry babies, every three hours, 24 hours a day, for about three weeks."

If you love your Lhasas and they are your pets then I hope you will give careful, careful consideration to

what their job should be. Where I come from, pet Lhasas have one job...to be your beloved companions, to care about you, to entertain you and to be with you. If you use your dogs for breeding then you are changing their jobs...with potentially disastrous results.

LL, Leslie