



Wolfdog Buyers Guide

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We are approached each year numerous times concerning new Wolfdog Purchases. Some of the people asking questions are new to owning Wolfdogs, some have never owned one before, and some are repeat owners. Each time we are approached, the questions are nearly identical. "Who is the best breeder to buy from?" "What are the best line, percentage, and or combination?" Have you heard of _____, and are they good?" Unfortunately though the questions are similar and easy to ask, the answers are quite complex and can change often. We think it is important to guide owners in the right direction and support "bettering the breed". It is because of this that we have created this buyers guide to assist you in making a decision concerning your new family addition.

➤ **New to the Wolfdog World?**

Wolfdogs can be wonderful life long companions. They are however, a very "special needs" type of canine. They may have restrictions, special ordinances, requirements, and so forth in your state, county, and/or local community. It is also possible that your Home Owners Insurance

Policy may have restrictions on them as well. Combine these with the everyday special needs of the Wolfdog, like containment, diet, veterinary care, ect. and the Wolfdog may not be the best addition to your family.

Prior to purchase or adoption, it is important to be prepared. Making a hasty decision can spell disaster for you, your family, your property, your finances, your community, and your new family member. Review your local and state laws as well as your insurance requirements. Locate and educate yourself with Wolfdog related articles, books, and information. Speak with other owners as well. This will hopefully help get you ready for your new life with a Wolfdog. More information and assistance can be found on our site at www.thedarkforestgroup.com

➤ **Getting ready for your new Wolfdog**

Once you have made your decision to add a Wolfdog to your family, you should take some time to prepare for its arrival. We usually do not recommend a quick purchase or adoption. Doing so will leave you unprepared in certain areas which could have serious negative effects. Begin your preparation several months in advance. It is also highly recommended to visit several breeders and/or sanctuaries prior to purchase in order to insure they are legitimate.

Take this opportunity to re check your State and local ordinances concerning Wolfdogs. Ordinances, requirements, and restrictions can change often. It is important to constantly monitor these. One of the easiest methods is to check with your board of supervisors and Animal Control Officer.

Prepare your containment area. If it is an older one, thoroughly check it over for weaknesses, holes, and other damage. If you do not have containment, now would be the time to start construction. Wolfdogs can grow fast and it will be no time until it will have to spend some time outdoors. You do not want that day to arrive and not have the containment ready or lack of funds to do so.

Check with your family Veterinarian and let them know of your decision. Make sure they are comfortable with or able to continue treatment for Wolfdogs. Since Veterinary practices change hands, and/or close, and have people coming and going, they may not continue servicing all breeds like they previously may have. If this is the case, you will need to start searching for alternative veterinary care for your future Wolfdog immediately.

➤ **Adoption or breeder purchase?**

There are two different ways to obtaining your new Wolfdog. You can get them from a breeder or from a Rescue/Sanctuary. Both can have advantages and disadvantages. The majority of the time we recommend Adopting from a Sanctuary. The reason behind this is that you are more likely to purchase a misrepresented animal from a breeder than getting one from a sanctuary. There are more breeders selling misrepresented Wolfdogs that may or may not have health and genetic issues than ones that are not. We see little logic in paying a bad breeder \$500+ for a dog you could get from a sanctuary or even your local pound for \$50. You will most likely get the same quality, spend less money doing such, help that needy dog as well as the next one that will take its place, and help the sanctuary all at the same time. As a bonus you may also get an animal that has had its temperament, lineage, content, veterinary care, and health checked as well. Sounds like a no brainer to us.

Sometimes it's more beneficial to seek out the few good breeders when getting Higher Content Wolfdogs. In our experience, Higher Content Wolfdogs need to be obtained when they are quite young in order to effectively bond with you and your family correctly. Sanctuaries rarely get in High Content Puppies or have older High Content Wolfdogs that could be rehomed.

➤ **General Wolf and Wolfdog information**

Now would be an excellent time to learn or brush up on your knowledge of Wolves, Wolfdogs, and perhaps some lineages. For wolves there are several publications available at book stores or online. For wolfdogs there are several sites listed on our site that will assist you as well. This activity will assist you in making the rest of the process operate more quickly. This is especially important to those newer to owning Wolfdogs. While weeding through breeders and facilities, you will come across some really outlandish claims and having this information up front can really help. It's a sad fact, but the majority of Wolfdog owners have been scammed at one point in time by bad breeders misrepresenting their animals with flashy websites, advertising, smooth talking, and false documentation. Do not join this club and support these types of breeders. They only help destroy the Wolfdog. Help promote "bettering the breed" by doing your research on any breeder you are looking to purchase from prior to purchase.

Studies have shown that Wolves were the first canines to share early man's homes. It is undetermined if this was out of necessity, curiosity, or force. After this point it wasn't long before the Dog and Wolfdog did the same. The Wolfdog existence can be traced back predating

most breeds of dog we know of today. Unfortunately there was little documentation on any Wolfdog lineages prior to 100 years ago. This can be useful information if you were to encounter a breeder claiming his lineage dates back to his great grandfather or longer. Claims of lineages predating these documentations are either monumental historical recordings or false claims. Older breeder family lineages should be severely scrutinized.

Wolves are canines and are in no way descendants of Felines or any other form of predatory cat. The average male wolf is around 100lbs. and isn't that much larger than many other large dogs. The largest recorded wolf in North America was only 175 lbs. This was extremely rare and should not be considered normality. Large Wolves or Wolfdogs are likely getting their size from other breeds of dog used in their mix.

Wolves reproduce once per year. Their heat cycle begins in the fall and pups are born in the spring. The same will be true of High Content Wolfdogs. There are not exceptions to this due to being kept in captivity, indoors, a warmer climate, hormone shots, or other reasons. Be wary of claims to the contrary of these scientifically documented wolf facts.

Wolf species and sub species are another area to research. Many bad breeders will give exotic species names to their litters or lineages to inflate their price. Some of these species will be extinct, endangered, rare, or extremely protected. Some of the current most common ones are Red Wolf, Mexican Wolf/Lobo, or Dire Wolf. Both the Mexican and Red Wolf are extremely rare and teetering on the verge of extinction. The existing captive and wild stock have been seized and used in reintroduction programs. These programs take place in monitored areas where people are not allowed to trap. The workers at these facilities will not be allowed to sell stock to breeders, family, or friends. With this in mind, the likelihood of that breeder having real Red Wolf or Lobo stock is extremely rare. The Dire Wolf was a prehistoric wolf that roamed the landscape after the reign of the dinosaurs. This animal went extinct around the beginning of the age of man. The likelihood that a breeder has one of these in his back yard is laughable at best. More information on Wolf subspecies can be found online at the international wolf center www.wolf.org or your local library.

Wolf stock for breeding is not that abundant. Despite what many breeders will tell you, you cannot just go down to the corner and buy a wolf from a guy on the street. With ever growing State and Federal laws concerning wildlife sale and trapping, actual wolf stock for breeding decreases daily. There was a time when people could go out and simply trap stock for Wolf or

Wolfdog breeding programs or furs. In fact, that is how many of the well established Wolf and Wolfdog lines came about. Most of them were trapped for fur farms. As regulations tightened on these practices, these places found out they could make more money off sales of the whole animal to zoos or breeders. These same types of regulations continue to tighten and nearly eliminate all types of private live trapping for this type of trade. Most of the real current wolf lineages in captive breeding facilities are decades old and quite protected by their breeders. There are only a handful of good breeders left with actual wolf stock. Each one of these should be verifiable by some sort of verifiable certificate or tag # not just word of mouth. Be wary of breeder claims of trapping their own, or buying from trappers, Native Americas, reservations, or zoos.

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Some breeders will adorn their lines with false or meaningless titles. Among these are using registries like the CKC, UKC, WWKC, ect. These breeders prey on the fact that reputable registries will not allow any unverified animals in. Unfortunately there are other registries with less strict standards. These registries are quite meaningless to the buyer other than warning them that there is a potential problem. These outside registries will register any animal the person can pay for. They will also list that animal however the person wants it listed. The certificate may state that a particular dog is a High Content Wolfdog, where in reality it may not even be a Wolfdog at all. There use to be several Wolfdog registries but all but Lupine Awareness has closed. All other registries should be severely scrutinized. There is another very common sales ploy in claiming and adorning one's line with Walt Disney's White Fang. White Fang is the most claimed Wolfdog in lines across North America. Unfortunately there is no way that this 1 dog sired that many animals. White Fang's real name was Jed. He was famous for portraying many Wolves and Wolf Dogs in several Hollywood movies. He was a Malamute crossed Wolfdog and owned by Clint Rowe. He died in 1995 at an astonishing age of 18. Clint did not have time to continually breed Jed and give/sell the pups as he is a very famous Hollywood animal trainer. Clint continues to work in movies and I doubt it would be very difficult to get in touch with him and verify any of Jed's line. Good breeders do not have to adorn their lines with such false advertising. If these are encountered we recommend simply walking away from the purchase or severe scrutiny.

Unfortunately there are so many other deceptive breeder practices here to list that this document could easily become a novel with a few sequels. We have touched on a few of the more common ones above. For a more in-depth list, please visit our site or contact us directly.

➤ **Preparing your lists**

We highly recommend organizing your information on your prospective breeders or sanctuaries. Start separate computer files or hard copies on each different one in order to reduce confusion or blending of information. Each time you see or get information on them, place it in their respective files so you can address them or review the information at a later date.

Take some time to invest in a camera and a notebook or two. These will be used to document each breeder and/or sanctuary you visit. Jot down some questions in them to ask now, so you do not forget them later. We have provided a starter list to be printed out below.

➤ **Getting out and making visits**

Good Wolfdog breeders and Sanctuaries today can be bad ones tomorrow and vice versa. Due to this, we never recommend purchase or adoption sight unseen. There are many websites that cater to this practice. We highly recommend avoiding these any breeder or site that will sell to you sight unseen without any form of physical contact. Try to evaluate more than one facility in person. This will give you the opportunity to check out them, their facilities, and their animals. We also recommend doing this prior to purchase, meaning NOT on purchase day. It is far too easy to talk yourself into a commitment despite your better judgment being against it.

Unfortunately there is not an abundance of good unbiased information concerning Wolfdog Breeders or Facilities. With that in mind, the best source for identifying a bad breeder or facility is you. There are a few sources that can help you narrow it down with little leg work. First, look at their website. It is doubtful that a breeder will list themselves as a bad one right off. Look at their site and check on the info they post. You would be surprised how many breeders can be listed as “bad” due to the nonsense they post on their site. A couple of good sources for picking apart breeder websites and phone calls are Steve Sojorn's site www.sjblues.com & Cindy Matthew's site <http://viriniawolves.webs.com/>. These sites will contain listings of some breeders with well known bad track records. When you run out of info there, you will need to proceed to the next level and actually start visiting.

Begin with recommendations made inside the Wolfdog community. This does not make these recommendations good or bad. Call these breeders and facilities first. You may be able to save yourself a trip if the information they are willing to give over the phone is bad, untruthful, or downright bad. Next, visit these remaining facilities to determine their status for yourself. Take your notebook and camera, and have prepared questions and topics to ask and discuss. Take notes, pictures, and interact with the animals especially the breeding pair. Most good breeders and facilities will be use to and ok with this. If not, you already have reason for concern and

perhaps it is best to pass them up as they are likely not the best breeder or facility. Do NOT visit after a litter has been born. Cute faces can over ride good judgment any day. You are there now to look over the facilities, breeding animals and paperwork. Ask for copies of their paperwork and or lineages. You may not get a pedigree to take with you but you should at least get some general information to research later. Items you should be focusing on are do they provide education, guarantees, assistance, contracts, health certificates, references, and verifiable pedigrees. If not, this is likely not the best breeder/facility to do business with.

In our opinion the next most important part of the visit is evaluating all the animals. Examine to see if the animals look healthy and well cared for. Special emphasis should be given to the breeding pair. This is what your puppy will be like. You don't have to be an expert. Get a general feel if the content is as advertised. More importantly how are the manners and disposition? Can you interact with them? We are not fans of breeders that have breeding stock only. A good breeder knows the importance of not only passing on looks but temperament as well. This cannot be thoroughly achieved with animals that cannot interact with people. If you are turned away from interacting with the animals, getting close to them, or even seeing them, then I suggest turning away from the purchase as well.

The point of all of this leg work is for you to determine a good breeder by weeding out the bad ones. Take your notes, pictures, and information provided by the breeder home to do some investigating. If you get a bad vibe, note it. Bad vibes are good indicators of bad breeders and facilities. If you followed these suggestions, you now have the time to refer back to your notes and research the information. If you didn't follow these steps, you may now have a pup then to only to find out that it may have health issues, false background, or more at a later date.

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Verifying the information you have gathered isn't really that difficult. Get in touch with the Wolfdog community. This can be done through contacting individuals within the community or joining many of the Wolfdog chat groups available on service providers like America Online or Yahoo. Many people on these groups can point you toward some resources or even the names listed in the pedigrees. You may contact some of the older sanctuaries and rescues as well. See if they have seen any of this line has come into rescue. A high number ending up in rescue isn't a good sign at all. Check the references and other owners you have gathered earlier. Aside from general information and satisfaction ask about any health or behavioral issues despite how minor. Pattern issues may be a warning sign of line degradation.

Every Wolfdog breeder has bad rumors circulating about them. Some are warranted and some are not. Many times the source can be from a competing breeder or a militant rescue group or inexperienced sanctuary. None of which are validation by any means. As the purchaser, you should be the one to investigate the reputation to see if there is some validity to the bad claims. You will find in some cases that there are not. But that doesn't mean that they should be ignored. Continue tracing down the rumors and ask more people. The more people that actually repeat what you were informed; the closer that rumor may be to the actual truth.

Good Wolfdog breeders will actually assist you greatly in the above visitation and information gathering processes. A good Wolfdog breeder will have as many inquiries of you as you will of them. They should be genuinely concerned and interested that you and your home are safe, secure, and prepared for their animals. They may be very protective of their puppies and line. They may have contracts, background checks, and home visits for you prior to purchase and throughout ownership.

When your visitation is complete, file away all your information and repeat with another breeder or facility. When you eventually find the perfect breeder or facility for you and have your new pup, keep in touch with that breeder or facility. See if their support and guarantees are hollow. Share your experiences with the next person that asks the same questions you were not long ago.

➤ **Begin your new Companionship**

Once you bring your new companion home, you have now made a lifetime commitment to love, protect, and share every aspect of your life with your new companion for the rest of their life. Keep in touch with the rest of the Wolfdog community you have discovered earlier in order to assist you with that task. We too are part of that community and dedicated to helping you in any way we can as well. Above all else, enjoy their love and your special bond together for it will make a lasting impression on your and others lives.

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Wolfdog Buyers Guide Forms

Name of Breeder/Facility: _____

Breeder address, website and phone#: _____

Years claimed involved/experience with Wolfdogs: _____

Who recommended them to you? _____

What content range/percentage of Wolfdog are they advertising? _____

Are they prelisted as bad breeders with our recommended sites? _____

Why? _____

Proceeding from here with a "yes" answer should be done with extreme caution

Look over their website

Do they have the breeding stock on site? _____

What percentage/content range are the parents? _____

What month were the parents born? _____

Pure Wolves, High content & high percentage are only born between late Feb-early May

What month is the litter scheduled for? _____

Pure Wolves, High content & high percentage are only born between late Feb-early May

Wolf or Wolfdog breeding stock facts listed on their site? _____

Are these facts verifiable with our recommended sites or other outside sources? _____

Can you purchase from their website unseen with minimal information from you? _____

A yes answer here will likely indicate a puppy mill and or bad breeder

Contact them by phone

Where did their line originate? _____

What mixture of Wolf and Dog are used? _____

Do they have pedigrees? _____

What do they feed? _____

How often is their veterinary care? _____

What care do they provide for puppies? _____

What age are they pulled? _____

What age are they sold? _____

Do they sound knowledgeable or do they struggle? _____

Verify the above information with others inside the Wolfdog community or contact us.

Notes on any of the previous _____

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Site Visitation

Is the facility clean? _____

Are the animals well fed and appear in good condition or health? _____

Are the pens secure and in good condition to keep the animals in? _____

Are you allowed to see the animals and breeding pair? _____

Are you allowed to take pictures? _____

Do the animals appear to look wolfy? _____

Compare pics of them to dog breeds like Huskies, Malamutes, or German Shepherd Dogs. They should be visibly different for anything mid content/percentage and above.

Can you get close to the animals or interact with them? _____

Do they appear aggressive, mean, or extremely fearful? _____

The above are poor traits that can easily be passed on. What are the reasons given for this?

Will they give you any documentation on their lineage or breeding pair? _____

If not, will they at least verbally give you information on it? _____

If the answer to the above is no, it is likely their animals are misrepresented

Lineage information including any dogs used _____

Do they offer any health guarantees? _____

A good breeder or facility should offer at least a 30 day guarantee in writing

Will they take their animals back or exchange them if there are issues? _____

Does the breeder/facility seem agitated with your notes, questions or pictures? _____

A yes answer can be an indicator of something to hide or poor business practices

Are they trying to push you into a sale now or in the very near future? _____

Have they asked you any questions about your home yet? _____

A "no" answer will likely indicate a puppy mill or a breeder only concerned with profit.

Do they have any other documentation you can take with you? _____

Do they seem concerned with their puppies future or just interested in getting your \$? _____

Do they have customer references and who? _____



For any further assistance, please feel free to visit our site and contact us.



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