

zürcher
tierschutz



Wir helfen Tieren



Checklist for purchasing a dog

How to recognize serious offers in five steps.

Online dog trade: Animal suffering included

The variety of dogs to adopt on the internet is immense. It doesn't matter if Chihuahua, Bulldog or rescued street dog – the desired quadruped is often already available after a few clicks. What most people don't know: illegal dog breeding – and plenty of animal suffering – is hiding behind many online offers and cute puppy pictures.

In cruel puppy mills abroad, female dogs are exploited during their entire life as reproduction machines and they get treated like garbage, just like their puppies. Also, the trading of street dogs often sets its focus on profit.



Cute photos of trend-breeds and a quick delivery at the closest border or even in front of your door – unscrupulous offers like this catch customers in their trap.

The consequences of such an origin are fatal: many of the dogs ordered directly on the internet are seriously sick within their first year or will even have to be put to sleep. The dogs who survive don't have it easy either: Often they are abandoned by their overwhelmed owners at animal shelters because they need lifelong expensive treatments or develop behaviour disorders.

First considerations

Are you ready to take the entire responsibility for your dog during its 10 to 20 years of life? Do you have the necessary Know-How, enough time and money, to always take care of him appropriately?

Take your time and consider in advance about the purchase of a dog. On our website, we list the most important questions that you should ask yourself prior to getting a dog:

→ www.zuerchertierschutz.ch/getting-a-dog

Find serious offers

During your search for your dream dog, stick to the following tips, so that you don't support the horrible puppy mills or other unserious offers. Use our checklist to make sure the dog comes from a serious breeder or an animal protection association.

Serious offers fulfil all the points of our checklist.

Here you can find more information about the cruel trading of dogs:

→ www.zuerchertierschutz.ch/puppy-trade

Most important tips

- ✓ Invest time to search for a dog.
- ✓ Inform yourself about the needs of the desired breed.
- ✓ Get to know the dog and the vendor.
- ✓ Be critical and ask questions.
- ✓ Report suspicious offers. (see box on the page 8)



Separated too early from their mother and transported to Switzerland over long distances – Online puppies often arrive sick and traumatized at their destination.

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Photos Titel: © Adobe Stock, Oleg; Chihuahuas: © Adobe Stock, TRAVELARIUM; puppies in cage: © Veterinäramt Karlsruhe; pet passport: © Shutterstock, Kira Yan

Step 1: Investigate, review the advertisement

- No exaggerations** and not too many spelling mistakes (for example: «dog his 5 weeks», «playfull», «FIT AS A FIDLE!!»).
- Information about the dog** available: (at least on request)
 - Breed
 - Age and sex
 - Country of breeding¹ (= country of birth)
 - Country of origin¹ (= current country of residence)
 - Photo/video (in alignment with the description of the dog)
 - Honest description of the character and needs (in alignment with the descriptions on www.zuerchertierschutz.ch/dog-breeds)
- Contact information** available:
 - Name¹
 - Adresse¹
 - Email adresse/Phone number
 - Website (important for animal protection organizations)
- Price** in normal range:
 - Pedigree puppies: usually starting at CHF 2,000. Pedigree clubs provide information on typical prices.
 - Dogs from animal protection associations: approximately CHF 250 to 700
- The dog will not be given away without **meeting** it first. → see step 3

Special for Pedigree puppies

- The breeder offers a maximum of two different breeds or two litters (= approximately 2–24 puppies) at once.
- The breeder is a member of a national FCI breeding association (e.g. CH: SKG², FR: SCC³, GER: VDH⁴).
- Pedigree papers** are certified by the breeding association and are provided in any case without extra cost.

¹ Must always be stated online, requested by law.

² SKG: Swiss Kennel Club: Schweizerische Kynologische Gesellschaft,

³ SCC: French Kennel Club: Société Centrale Canine

⁴ VDH: German Kennel Club: Verband für das deutsche Hundewesen

Step 2: Ask questions

- Gather all the information that are missing after step 1, and ask further questions about the dog's **origins, care, and health**.
- The person of contact will answer your questions thoroughly and without contradiction.
- You will be asked about your living situation and experience with dogs. For dogs from animal protection association, a preliminary control may be conducted at your home.

Important questions for pedigree puppies

- How many litters (including the current one) did the bitch have? → max. 3 litters
- Why were these parents chosen for this litter? → Good health and character
- Have the parents been tested for hereditary diseases?
- Are the puppies regularly dewormed?
- How are the puppies socialized⁵?
- Did the breeder attend a breeding training? → Attending further education on a regular basis is important.

Important questions for rescued dogs

- What is known about the dog's past and health?
- Dogs from abroad (Mediterranean areas): will they be tested for Mediterranean diseases before departing? More information on www.zuerchertierschutz.ch/mediterranean-diseases
- Is the dog vaccinated and dewormed? → See vaccinations in step 4
- How is the adoption fee used? → Serious organizations can confirm that all funds are invested for dog care, medical treatments, or animal protection projects.

⁵ Socialization: getting used to other dogs, animals, people and everyday situations. The socialization phase must be well-planned and should not overwhelm the puppies.



Step 3: Get to know

The dog

- You can meet the dog in person.
- Pedigree puppies are shown together **with their mother**. They interact stress-free with each other, and the mother's nipples are clearly visible.
- Dogs are not docked⁶.
- Dogs are free of signs of **extreme conformations**⁷.
- All dogs seem to be **healthy**, i. e. they
 - are well-nourished, but without a swollen stomach,
 - are clean, not matted, and do not suffer from excessive hair loss,
 - have no fluid running out from their eyes or nose,
 - are lively and not anxious,
 - do not pant excessively,
 - do not scratch themselves constantly,
 - do not show any lameness,
 - do not have diarrhea.

Care & housing conditions

- You can visit all the places where the dog is kept.
- The dog has sufficient **space**, places to retreat, **access to outdoor activity** and fresh air. He lives in the house with the family, never in kennels (except in animal shelters).
- The premises looks well-maintained.

The vendor ...

- ... informs about the dog's specific needs (housing, care, nutrition).
- ... does **not push for a rush purchase** and allows you to make further visits.

⁶ Docking = Cutting part of the dog's ears and/or tail. Docking as well as the import of already docked dogs is prohibited in Switzerland.

⁷ Extreme conformations, such as the often too small heads of Chihuahuas or the short muzzle of bulldogs, causing lifelong suffering. The necessary medications and surgeries can result in very high costs. More information on www.zuerchertierschutz.ch/extreme-conformations



Step 4: Check the documents

- Before the purchase, you can review the following documents:
 - Swiss dogs: Pet passport/vaccination card, pedigree papers (for pure bred dogs), purchase contract
 - Dogs from abroad: Pet passport (including vaccinations), pedigree papers (for pure bred dogs), purchase contract
- The information contained corresponds to the information previously received.
- The content of the purchase contract is aligned to the example on www.zuerchertierschutz.ch/sample-purchase-agreement

Pet passport or vaccination card

- Dogs from abroad: all **import regulations** are applied, see www.zuerchertierschutz.ch/import-regulations
- Age** at handover: Swiss dogs at least 8 weeks old, dogs from abroad see import regulations. If uncertain, consult the breed association or veterinarian.
- Mikrochip number** («Identification»/«Alphanumeric Transponder Code»):
 - 15-digit number, the first 3 digits correspond to the country code of the country of birth or the manufacturer code, see www.zuerchertierschutz.ch/laendercode
 - Date and location of implantation
 - Swiss dogs: registered in AMICUS dog database. Can be checked on www.europetnet.org
- Identification page is laminated or sealed.
- Vaccinations** according to the import regulations & age:
 - at 8 weeks: first vaccination against the common diseases distemper (D⁸), infectious canine hepatitis (H⁸ or HCC⁸), canine parainfluenza virus (Pi⁸ or KC⁸), leptospirosis (Lepto⁸), and parvovirus (P⁸)
 - at 12 weeks: second vaccination against the common diseases and first vaccination against rabies (R⁸ or rabies) (only recommended in Switzerland, see import regulations for other countries)

⁸ Abbreviations commonly used on vaccination stickers. If it is unclear against which diseases a vaccine is effective, see www.vetpharm.uzh.ch under «Tierarzneimittel» (veterinary drugs).



Step 4: Check the documents

- Vaccination records include the vaccine sticker, date, stamp, and signature of the veterinarian.
- Specified veterinary practice has an existing address in the country of breeding.
- For pet passports: the passport number (see photo below) is visible and identical on each page.



Step 5: Pick up the dog



Before the handover

- Make an appointment to pick up the dog **in person**. It will never be handed over on the first visit. Delivery only if no other option is possible (e. g., too far away abroad) and you have already met the dog and the owner. Puppies under 15 weeks old must be **imported in person** according to the Animal Welfare Ordinance (Article 76b).
- Registration** as a dog owner at the municipality.

During the handover

- The dog looks healthy and lively.
- I will get:
 - Purchase contract
 - Vaccination certificate/pet passport
 - For pedigree dogs: official papers
 - Information on previous medical treatment (including deworming)
 - A few food rations
 - For delivery to Switzerland: Swiss customs stamp in the pet passport and a TRACES document
- Payment: partial payment upon reservation or full payment upon handover. Never without a purchase contract!

After the handover

- Dogs from abroad: If entering Switzerland privately, register the dog at the **Swiss customs** and pay VAT.
- Dogs from abroad: Have the microchip **checked by a veterinarian** within 10 days and register it in AMICUS.
- Swiss dogs: Within 10 days, you and the previous owner must register online the adoption of the dog in AMICUS. A check-up by a veterinarian is recommended within 2 months.

Tips for a good start in the new home

You can find valuable tips and tricks about animal care, housing and education on

→ www.zuerchertierschutz.ch/keeping-a-dog

What to do if you see suspicious offers?



- Report suspicious advertisements individually by email or using the platform's reporting service.
- If an entire website looks unserious, it should be reported to the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office : info@blv.admin.ch.
- If you only realize later that the offer is dubious (e. g., when visiting the breeder or during the handover), report it immediately to the responsible local veterinary authority (e. g., the cantonal veterinary office).
- Never buy dogs from suspicious vendors – not even out of pity. Dubious breeding and illegal trade can only be stopped if the profit-making fails.

We help animals. With advice and action.

Information brochures

You can download or order further brochures and flyers on the Zurich Animal Protection website



Info-Material (mostly in German)

www.zuerchertierschutz.ch/haustier-ratgeber

Animal Adoption

Are you looking for a companion animal? Many animals are waiting for a loving home in our animal shelter. Call us or find out more about our current residents on our website.



Waiting for a new home

www.zuerchertierschutz.ch/adoption



Questions about adoption

044 261 97 14

Free Consultation

Ask the specialists. The Zurich Animal Protection and the Zurich Veterinary Hospital offer free consultation on the care, housing, feeding, and health of pets.



For dogs
and cats

044 261 97 14



For all other pets,
especially exotic animals

044 635 83 43

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