

BUYING LÖWCHEN



Photo Alice Bixler

Deciding to buy any dog is an important decision. Buying a Löwchen is both exciting and challenging. Löwchen are not common in most countries so finding Löwchen breeders can still be difficult.

Many people become aware of the breed through neighbors, friends or relatives who own one. Breed exhibitors become aware of the breed through dog publications or by seeing them at shows. The Löwchen attracts its admirers just by being itself, happy and joyous. Their charming personalities win over many admirers.

Since you may need to do some research to find Löwchen start with the national breed club. They often advertise in dog magazines. The national parent club is an excellent source of information on the breed. Governing bodies of dog clubs in other countries are good sources that should be able to provide contact information for the Löwchen national breed club. In the United States this is the American Kennel Club; in Canada, the Canadian Kennel Club. In Great Britain, contact the Kennel Club and elsewhere around the world contact the Federation Cynologique Institute (FCI). Another way to find the breed is by meeting breeders at dog shows that have classes for Löwchen. This is a good idea even if you are not interested in buying a show dog, since you will be able to talk to those that are intensely involved with the breed and often are good sources of information. Sometimes

the person you meet may have a litter planned or on the ground, or know someone else that does.

One of the functions of national breed clubs is to promote the breed. If contacting a national breed club you should contact the corresponding secretary. They are responsible to answer all inquiries for breed information. The Secretary will usually have a list of breeders. Be aware that sometimes these lists are paid advertising and not all breeders will opt to be included. Lack of inclusion on club breeder referral lists does not indicate anything about a breeder, good or bad.

As you become more certain the Löwchen is the breed for you, make sure you have educated yourself in all aspects of the breed. Get to know the Löwchen as well as you can. Try to visit kennels, read whatever literature you can find on the Löwchen and talk with both breeders and pet owners. The better you understand the breed, the better chance you have to acquire the right dog.



A friend of Madame Benenrt With Berta and her puppies c. 1954. Photo Gini Denninger



An attractive group of puppies from the Kieselgrund Kennel. Photo Berndt Kies

Now that you are certain the Löwchen is for you, you will need to decide certain things, whom to buy from, what you can spend, the sex of the dog, and whether to buy pet or show.

Pet Or Show?

This is not a question for most people since most are seeking a family pet and do not need to worry about this. Some buyers have a mistaken impression that buying a show quality dog will give them the best dog in the litter. This is wrong. The designation show quality only pertains to the dog's physical qualities such as having enough neck, feet aligned perfectly, just right angulation, scissors bite, anything that pertains to the standard. A show quality dog has physical characteristics that adhere as close as possibly to the breed standard. What does it matter if you are interested in buying a pet that its bite might not be near perfection or that its ears are not set in the right spot? These are mere physical characteristics that have nothing to do with how the dog will fit into your household. If buying a pet, your main concern should be health and temperament. Conformation is secondary to these two qualifications. You can assume that if the dog comes from a quality breeder it will still be a good example physically of the breed. All the puppies of a given litter come from the same genetic material, none is genetically inferior to the other in terms of being a good pet.

Considering the purchase of a show dog involves some considerations. Exhibiting a dog takes money and can become an all-consuming passion. You can put much time into this hobby, bordering on obsession. Showing dogs can even be dangerous to your marriage or family relationships due to the time required! Some people exhibit at shows held near home and others go around the

world to shows. The best way to learn what is involved with showing dogs is to talk to someone who seriously participates in the show world. Then consider if the commitment is right for you. Do this before you buy your show dog, not after.

Sex Of Your Dog

Unless you are buying a dog for breeding purposes, the sex of the dog should not make a difference to you. Many pet owners call a breeder and express a preference for one sex over the other. Having a preference will automatically discount fifty percent of the dogs available at any given time.

The sex preferred by most pet buyers is female. People have the mistaken idea that housebreaking is easier with females. The only difference is that not properly housebroken, the male will lift his leg, while a dirty female is harder to detect. You may not realize your female is squatting to urinate and not just sitting there. Some people think that male hormones predispose males to marking territory. Hormones in both sexes if the pet is un-neutered and not properly



When buying a show puppy, look for a puppy that well put together even at a young age. This puppy was promising from the start. He is Ch. Chic Choix Kangaroo du Nord, a famous Finnish show dog. Photo Juha Kares



Crazy Gremlin's Akira Photo Bianca

housebroken, can affect housebreaking. If a dog is a pet there is no reason it should not be neutered. Successful housebreaking depends on consistency of the owner. Another reason some people prefer females is the idea that they are sweeter and more nurturing as pets. This is not necessarily the case. A dog's temperament depends on its breeding and upbringing. Of more importance than sex is how the dog is handled and trained by their owner. Some breeders feel that their males have slightly sweeter temperaments and their females are somewhat self-centered. There is a possible explanation for this. Females are programmed by nature to raise their young. If they do not survive, their young will not survive. They may instinctively look out for themselves to ensure the continuation of their bloodlines. Before you think that females do not make good pets, keep in mind that differences between the sexes is slight. Spend more time considering the individual puppies or dogs that are offered for selection. Don't eliminate a possible prospect just because of its sex. Many people grew up with one or the other sex and have a strong preference out of habit. If you can find what you prefer, fine, but try to be open minded in your choice.

Cost

The cost for a Löwchen varies from region to region. Find out what the average price for a Löwchen is in the category (pet or show) from which you are planning to buy. Is this attainable? You may need to consider other options if not. You could look into

finding a less expensive dog from another region but must include the cost of getting the dog to you in addition to the price. You might consider an older dog that someone would like to place. Sometimes breeders have show or breeding dogs that they are looking to place in retirement homes at very reasonable prices. Often these retirees average in age from one to six years old. They adjust very well to becoming doted on house pets and are usually very easy to housebreak.

Do not base the dog's quality on price alone. You must consider the breeder and his/her amount of knowledge and involvement in the breed. It is just as easy for a back yard breeder to price dogs at the same level as one who puts all (money, time and love) into breeding dogs. You must get to know the breeder and decide on the quality of that person. Be prudent in your choice of cost and breeder.

Where To Buy Your Löwchen

This is difficult to explain. The best advice is to look for a breeder whom is screening you as much as you are screening him. A quality breeder asks many questions about you. You may not even realize they are asking for details, since they can be very subtle. You may be asked to reveal where you live, if you rent or own your own home. If you rent you may be asked to provide proof of your land lords agreement to your having a dog. Do you have children, how many and how old? Do you work? Do you have a fenced in yard? There are many questions that may be asked. The breeder is not merely being nosy, but trying to determine what type of environment you will provide for a dog.

A quality breeder wants the dog to live out its life in the home to which it was sold. They will often require that they be contacted if a buyer is unable to keep their dog. A breeder asks lifestyle questions in an attempt to prevent their puppies from going to the wrong home. Breeders try to be careful in their choice of homes for their puppies. Breeders try to determine which puppy is



A quality breeder has a sales contract Löwchen should have calm temperaments. This female is gentle enough to be a friend with Guinee Fowl babies. LCA Ch. Pepperland Miss Piggy CD. Photo Earl Marie Dingel

best suited to which puppy buyers. To get a dog able to live your lifestyle, give honest answers. Misleading the breeder may cause you to end up with a dog totally unsuitable for you. For example, an experienced breeder might ask if there is an unwilling family member involved. If there is, the breeder may question this. They will usually not place a dog into this situation since it often ends badly. To tell if the breeder is sincere, listen to the questions asked of you and the answers given to your questions. If you are well educated in the breed prior to speaking with breeders, you should be able to ask the right questions. A good breeder wants to answer any question you may ask and will not appear harried or impatient with you. that guarantees the dog's health and temperament. This contract may include requirements of the buyers too. They usually require that the dog be spayed or neutered by a certain date. A sales contract should protect both buyer and the breeder. If unhappy with the contract, discuss your hesitations with the breeder. If you are unable to resolve the problem, do not allow yourself to be pressured into buying the dog. There will always be other puppies available. On the flip side, try not to be difficult with your

prospective breeder since if you are, you may end up with a lessthandesirable dog down the road from a breeder with more lax standards.

If the breeder from whom you plan to buy lives locally, you will go to the breeder's home or kennel to see puppies. The age at which you will first be invited to see the puppies depends on when the breeder feels comfortable making them available for viewing. The earliest age that you will actually enjoy young puppies personalities is at four weeks when they become aware of the world around them. They begin to play and demand attention at this age. Most breeders will not allow you to chose from the entire litter since they usually pick the dog they would like to keep for themselves and other show quality potentials to sell to show homes. From the puppies remaining, the breeder will determine which puppies are suitable to your lifestyle. You may or may not be given a choice from puppies of the litter. Sometimes there will be only one puppy offered. It is your decision if it is the one you want. If you prefer another, discuss this with the breeder, explaining why. If the dog is show quality, you will most likely not be able to buy it unless you pay the show quality price, if you are given the option at all. Listen to the reasons the breeder gives you why they chose the puppy for you that they did. They know the puppies better than any one since they have watched them from birth on. There is generally a sound reason. Do not rely on the puppy tests you read about in dog books unless you are an experienced obedience or show person. People who are not intimately involved with large numbers of dogs through the years often misunderstanding or improperly perceiving the responses of puppies. Assuming your breeder is experienced in the breed they will best know each puppies temperament.

Eight weeks of age is the youngest you should expect to go home with your new puppy. It is rare that a quality breeder will let the puppy go home any earlier, unless there



A show dog should have presence and look like they enjoy being shown. CH. Kiji's Kameo Appearance Photo Kim Schmidt

is a very good reason, of which there are very few. The breeder should have vaccinated and wormed the dog at least once but preferably twice, and will provide dates of vaccination. Under no circumstances should you go home with an unvaccinated puppy since it is totally unprotected against illnesses that may kill it. A scrupulous breeder would never suggest this and those that do should not be selling puppies.

Buying The Show Dog

If you have made the decision to become involved with showing dogs and are looking for your show Löwchen, the first and most important thing you can do is know the breed inside and out. Once you know the breed's desirable qualities and faults, you will be ready to buy your dog. The best way to learn about the breed is to visit with breeders and go to shows.

Visiting breeders is especially important since they should be able to explain to you what they are looking for in their dogs. If you are lucky enough to live close to a breeder, try to work with them. Ask to learn how the breeder plans their litters. Learn what the breeder is expecting from planned breedings. Ask the breeder to verbalize why a certain breeding would be preferred. If possible, be there when puppies are born and try to follow their growth and progression from birth on. Learn how

Löwchen puppies develop. After a few litters you will know more than the average buyer does and will no doubt be able to purchase a dog with which you will be happy. It is important that your being allowed to learn from a certain breeder does not in debt you to buy your future show dog from that breeder. There should be no strings attached to your learning about the breed. The breeder should teach you for the betterment of the breed. Any breeder that puts strings on you in exchange for sharing information is not necessarily the best person with whom to work. On the other hand, do not take up a breeder's time by falsely promising to buy a dog from that person. Explain that you are serious regarding learning about the breed and would like their help. A breeder should be willing to share information with you purely for the breed's benefit. There are those who work happily with newcomers and others that jealously guard their secrets.

If you are unable to find someone close by who is willing to mentor you, you will have to rely on a long distance relationship with a breeder in order to get a show quality dog. They may send photos of prospects and explain what they like about the dog and what they perceive its faults to be. It is your decision if the dog is right for you. Once you decide to buy a dog, you will likely be asked to sign a contract. If you have any doubts, voice them since it is disappointing when a buyer does not follow through on a contract due to miscommunications. In these situations everyone is disappointed in the end. You, in turn, must trust the breeder to provide you with a quality dog and thus a contract protects you as well.

Contracts

What could be in a contract? Anything! Contracts can run from a few sentences to several pages. Even though the seller is the one who writes the contract, you have a choice in it, by the fact that you must agree to it. If there is anything disagreeable to you, don't sign and be indebted to terms you are unwilling to fulfill. Therein lies your choice. Is this dog worth signing to the terms this contract asks?



If you are interested in obedience consider asking your breeder to have the puppies temperament tested by an obedience expert to help pick the Löwchen most likely to succeed in the obedience ring. Ch Lambert's Maid Marion. Photo Earl Marie Dingel

What can you expect to find in an average contract? Many show dog contracts contain terms that a pet dog contract will not include. Besides the health guarantee and price, the contract will guarantee a dog's quality for the purpose bought. Additionally, if you buy a female, you may be asked to breed her and give at least one puppy back to the seller. How many litters will you be obligated to have to fulfill the contract and how many puppies should be given to the seller should be stated. Furthermore who pays what expenses should be included. Determine if the requirement is reasonable given the situation. Years ago the following happened to a veterinarian's clients. They were pet buyers who bought a female Bulldog, having paid a considerable amount for her. The buyers were also obligated to have a litter, which was to be given to the seller! While the seller did provide the stud service, sometimes they don't, these people paid dearly for their pet. Four puppies were born by Caesarean section at much expense to the buyer.

Tragically, the puppies slowly died over a period of weeks after being crushed by their mother. These people had no idea of the labor-intensive period after birth that Bulldog puppies required. They did not know that they had to prevent the mother from rolling on her puppies. They had never wanted to breed in the first place but agreed to the contract since they were so desperate to have a female bulldog. They ended up paying thousands of dollars, not to mention the stress they experienced. The whole point of the story is to encourage you to consider the possibilities before agreeing to a contract. Are the terms reasonable? What can total costs be? If the seller expects you to breed your female, who pays what? Does the seller choose the stud dog, if so, who pays the stud service? Are you prepared to pay the stud fee of the top dog in the country? How many puppies does the seller get, what order of pick do they choose from? There are many factors to consider. If you are looking for a female for pet do not agree to breed her. Breeding dogs carry's risks that many pet owners are unaware of.

If you are buying a male, what are your terms with the seller? Are you obligated to make the dog available to the seller for stud services? If so, how many times a year? Are you expected to make the dog available for public stud? If so, who gets paid what part of the stud fee? Who manages the breedings? Who is obligated to take care of the females coming for breeding? Who gets paid for what?

Are you buying a dog on coownership? You must have documented in a contract what is expected from both parties. Who maintains the co-owned dog and is responsible for expenses? Who pays which show fees? Are you agreeing to pay all show expenses with the coowner handling? If so, what costs might be incurred that you are expected to pay for? Are you paying for travel, hotels or meals of the handler? Do you pay all advertising expenses? There are so many costs that can be involved in



When importing research foreign breeders carefully to try to prevent any problems at a later time. Make sure they are successful in the show ring if you are seeking a show-breeding Löwchen. Ch. Wanted Take A Bow. Photo Jari Partenen.

campaigning a show dog. On the negative side, what if a catastrophe occurs when the dog is in your possession? Must you pay additional cash to the seller to make up for the loss of the dog?

To protect the seller, the contract may include a buyout fee that you are obligated to pay if you go against the terms of the contract. This is for the seller's protection since there is nothing they can do if the super-dog they sold you is neutered because you decided not to live up to your obligations. The buyout clause is the breeder's only protection to recoup their investment in the dog. You may wonder what investment that could be if they have not contributed to the dog's upkeep or show expenses. The very expense of maintaining the kennel that produced the dog must be factored in since there are considerable expenses involved with producing show dogs. What is actually paid for the dog is often actually far less than what went into the dog, in order to produce it.

Coownership questions should be considered. What if one co-owner wants to

sell their share of the dog? Does this co-owner have the right to sell? Does the other party have the right of buyout or approval of new coowners? If the buyer does not want to show anymore must the dog be returned or made available for exhibiting?

As you can see contracts can and should cover many details. They are for your and the sellers' protection. If you feel any terms are not agreeable to you, discuss them with the seller and see if you can come to agreement. If there is no compromise, it's better not to take the dog since you may end up with bigger problems than the dog is worth. Importantly, all contracts and amendments should be in writing. Problems have arisen when discussion over a contract occurs with a verbal promise to make changes after it is signed. Do not sign anything unless it is exactly as you want it. All agreements must be in writing and all subsequent changes must be signed by both parties.

Importing

Importing seems to hold a special cache for many. There is an implication that an imported dog is more valuable than a native bred dog. The idea of importing is exciting but if you are new to the breed you should consider dogs from native breeders first. Language constraints and distance can effectively limit the help of a foreign breeder will be able to give you on establishing your breeding program. Importing is best left to those experienced in the breed since they know their bloodlines strengths and weaknesses and what they are trying to accomplish by importing new blood.

Realize that if you import, you are dealing with total unknowns unless you have taken the time to become acquainted with the imported bloodlines. The internet is a wonderful tool to meet breeders and view dogs from around the world. Of course seeing dogs in person is best. If importing a dog still interests you then try to make a few visits to Löwchen breeders and dog show's in the country that you are planning to buy from. At dog shows, you should be able to meet breeders in person and hopefully develop a working relationship.

You may be surprised at what you find when viewing dogs in person in a

particular country, which may influence your decision whether or not import. One of the most efficient ways to see as many Löwchen as possible is to attend the FCI World Show when it is held on the European continent. Another way is by attending a Löwchen World Congress. If you are interested in an English Löwchen, contact the Löwchen Club and find out when the Club Show is held. Many Löwchen breeders attend this show. Shows are wonderful places to see Löwchen and get ideas as to who to buy from.

An additional benefit to going overseas is that, in addition to making arrangements to buy a dog, you can actually see it prior to your committing to buy it. If the dog is not what you had in mind, you will be spared the disappointment and cost of paying for a dog that is not what you are looking for to add to your breeding program. There are few guarantees when you import since the cost of shipping often makes replacement costly. Additionally, it is difficult to force a foreign breeder to stand behind the dog they sold you, if they chose not to.

The high costs of importing may make you willing to breed a dog that is substandard in order to recoup costs. This is not good for the breed. Don't import if you are not able to place a dog out of the breeding program if it is not up to your standards.

If you are still determined to import, the first course of action is to determine where you will buy. The Internet is a wonderful tool for getting to know foreign breeders as well as to help you find breed clubs. Keep in mind that there may be more than one national breed club in a given country. Once you have the addresses, you will need to write or call these clubs for further breeder information.

When dealing with breeders from other countries, do not expect them to speak English. If you do not speak their language, you will need the help of a translator. ATT offers the use



Remember, above all Löwchen are companion dogs who enjoy being with their owners. Melissa Harrington with her two Lowe-Ray Löwchen on the Long Island Sound. Photo Melissa Harrington.

of translators for transatlantic calls. Dial zero and ask for an international operator who will arrange translation services for you. This is expensive so have a list of questions ready. Remain noncommittal when initially dealing with breeders. Find out whether they export, possible costs, what may be currently or shortly available. Ask for photos of dogs available only if you are interested and seriously considering a certain breeder's dogs. Unfortunately, type varies from country to country. If you are not able to travel abroad to see Löwchen, you will have to rely on photos to see if a breeder has the type you desire. As imports increase into your country, you may see a pattern emerge indicating a country has the type you desire. If you repeatedly see quality dogs imported by other breeders ask them to help you to find dog.

Prior to buying and importing a Löwchen, make sure that its papers are acceptable by the registry registering Löwchen in your country. Some registries are not accepted by your country's registry, and imports from these countries are not able to be included in your breeding program. Do not take the breeders word that you can register their dogs. Take the time to be certain and contact your governing kennel club asking if they recognize the registration papers from that kennel club. Fortunately, most kennels clubs recognize each other. Keep in mind that when importing, you usually will not be asked to sign a contract or puppy back agreement. On the negative side,

you probably will not get any guarantees either. Once you have decided on a dog, all that remains is paying for and making shipping arrangements. Payment is usually made by international checks which are bought from commercial banks for a fee. Another way to pay is by bank transfer. After payment is made the exporting breeder will make the final shipping arrangements. Ask that they send the dogs registration papers prior to shipping, upon receipt of payment. Also be sure that the dog is registered in your name in their native registry since this makes registration in your own country easier. You might have to pay extra for this.

Some countries have quarantine. Quarantine restrictions are common for island countries such as England and Australia. There are some countries on the continent of Europe that restrict importation also. It is best to make certain that there are no restrictions when importing. Contact your government customs department.

of situations you may make life-long friendships with not only your breeder, but others also interested in the Löwchen.



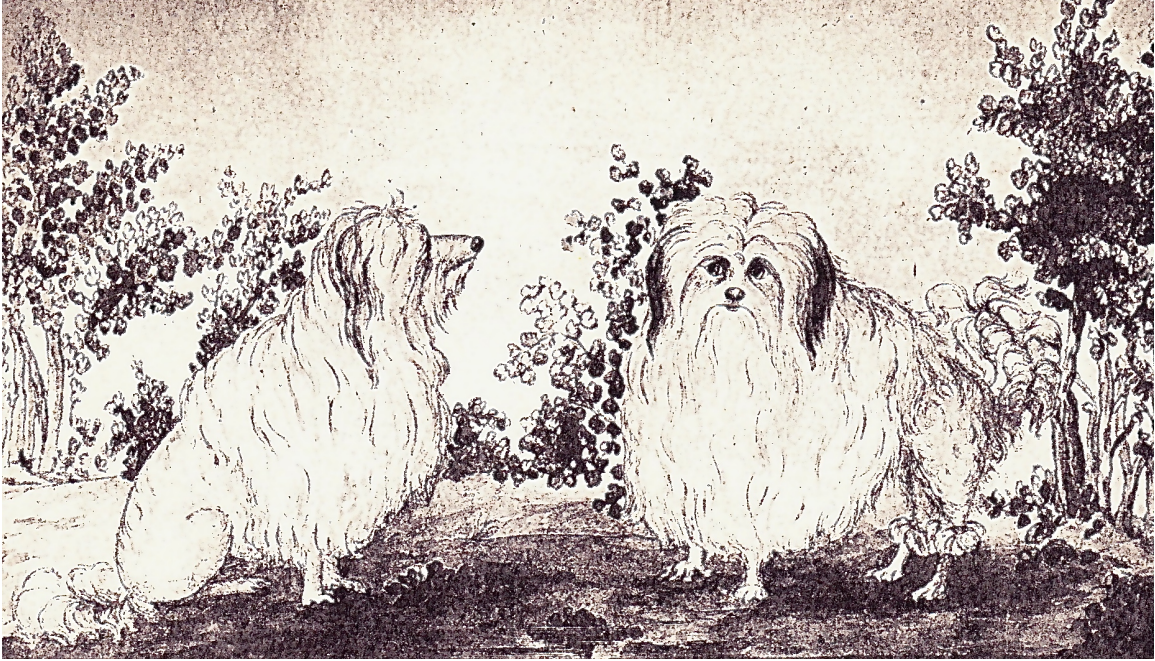
Onya von Burgwald. Photo Felizitas Dylla



Löwchen think they are people too! This bathing beauty is LCA Ch. Destiny's I Love A Parade. Photo Barbara Schmidt

Final Comments

Buying your Löwchen can be a good experience provided you take the time to properly chose your breeder as well as the dog. All breeders are not alike. But when you have found the right breeder, you will gain not only a dog, but at the very least a trusted advisor to help you when ever you have questions about your dog. In the best



Pencil on Paper. By Prince Friedrich v.Nassau at Weilburg Castle, Germany in 1815.
The family pets of the occupants of Weilburg Castle, Germany. This is the same castle that Bijou lived in!

