

Buying a Puppy



Congratulations! You are on the way to becoming the proud owner of one of the nicest dogs there is, yes you are thinking about getting a Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, or the Toller.

Before getting your puppy there are a few things you should consider. We hope that we have covered all the points in this but please feel free to ask if you need any more help.

There are plenty of places you can find out about these lovely dogs. If you are reading this then you have already found one of them, and there are links from this site to the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever Club which is the other club in the UK. It has a breed browser where you can find more details of the kennels and look at the pedigrees of the dogs. You will also find links to some of the overseas clubs and owners, which will also offer you advice on these dogs. The Breed Standard will be displayed on several of these websites.

Other sources of information are the Kennel Club (<http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/>) who has produced a special rare-breed owner's guide, and the 'bible' for most owners is a book called *The Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever* by Alison Strang and Gail MacMillan which is available to order through the normal book retailers. Also read all the magazines and books that you can to fully prepare yourself for the onslaught that is a fit, happy and lively puppy.

Should you consider going to Agility Shows, Discover Dogs, Working/Field Trials and Championship and Open Shows, you will find Tollers and owners who are always happy to talk about their dogs and give you advice. This may also help you to identify the skills you want to develop in your puppy.

So now you've done all the research here comes the wait which can be up to 2 years so be patient it will be worth it.

While you are waiting

You may want to think about the training you want your puppy to have and find out if there is a good puppy class near you as well as obedience training. Visit the classes to see if you like the way they are conducted. If you are considering showing your puppy then it is worth investigating Ringcraft classes in your area.

Agility is another area that Tollers excel in but this will have to wait until your puppy is at least a year old. The Kennel Club can help with contacts for these as can your vet.



Check out the vets in your area, do they have the same attitude to raising dogs as you? Do they run puppy socialisation evenings, offer monthly check ups for your puppy with the nurse to get them used to the veterinary environment? Don't forget to find out about registering your puppy with the vet you choose. Look into insurance for your puppy. There are many companies around so ask other pet owners about their experience, your vet may also be able to point you in the direction of ones they have least problems with.

Visit boarding kennels in your area to find one you are happy with. You may not intend to put your puppy into one but you can never predict when you will need one so find one that has the attitude to care that you do.

Health Matters

Health Statistics taken from Nova News, July 2006, NSDTR Club (UK)

When you have found the breeder you like and who is intending to breed then you need to find out some health information about the sire and dam. This may seem a bit daunting but it is worth it to ensure the health of your puppy. Don't worry, the incidence of the following problems is low, but this does not mean you should not aware of them.

Hips and skeleton

The breeder should have had hip scores done as part of the BVA/KC scheme, these should be done on every dog that is going to be bred, and a good score on the grandparents does not automatically follow on.

There have also been some problems noted with skeletal dysplasia in America, currently a study is being done and you can read about this on the NSDTR Club of USA website.

To July 2006, 252 Tollers have been hip scored with an average of 11.71; you should look for a hip score below the average.

Eyes

In your research you will have probably read that there can be eye problems with the Tollers. These are being bred out but you will still have to make sure that the right tests have been done. The problems that have been identified are Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA), Collie Eye Anomaly (CEA) and Choroidal Hypoplasia (CH). In the UK the checks are done annually under the BVA and the Kennel Club certificates are stamped accordingly, remember that this test will only show up when the eye is already affected.

There is a genetic test being done in America by a Company known as Optigen which identifies whether or not the dog is genetically affected. The hope is that the affected dogs won't be bred from and you should expect to see certificates for both the sire and dam which show them as clear. They can be cleared by parentage if all four grandparents are show as clear for PRA/CEA/CH. Please refer to the Optigen website (www.optigen.com) which will explain further about the genetic implications of these tests.

To July 2006 in the UK 6 Tollers had been reported as affected by PRA and 2 with corneal ulcers.

SRMA (Meningitis) and other health problems

There have been some puppies affected by SRMA which, if caught early, is very treatable. Research is being done into this and other auto immune diseases by the Cambridge Veterinary School and both the UK clubs are assisting with information to identify where these problems lie and their causes, the eventual hope is that they can be eradicated or at least very much reduced. Other problems identified to date are kidney disease (2 cases), fitting (3 cases) and thyroid problems (3 cases).

Please ask your breeder about these problems and whether or not they have experienced them or any others. They should be honest and not evasive; most have had no problems so you should expect a good response to any questions you ask.

Temperaments

The Toller is kind, confident, intelligent, easy to train and playful. They are not an aggressive dog although, unfortunately, there have been some incidences of aggression which is definitely not in character.

Talking to the Breeder and choosing your puppy

If you haven't been too alarmed and are now talking to your breeder then you need to find more out about the new family you are about to join.

Before visiting your breeder it is probably worth looking at the Kennel Club website to check out their requirements for an accredited breeder, these cover such things as the age of the bitch and number of litters and is a useful guide for you.

There should be no problem about visiting the litter of puppies after the first few weeks. The breeder may be reluctant to allow you to visit until they are past their first three or four weeks so as to reduce any chance of infection being passed to the litter. You should try and visit a couple of times. You should also be able to see the dam with the litter to see how she acts with them and you, the sire may not be present but if possible you should try and arrange to visit him as well. You will want to see both the sire and dam to see how they interact with people and talk about them with their owners. Any reluctance to allow visiting should raise alarm bells in your mind.

When you first visit your puppy look around you, are you comfortable with the surroundings, how many litters are there, how many types of dog. Be very careful if you feel uncomfortable or unsure about the situation you find yourself in.

Find out how the puppies have been socialised, ideally they will have been in the house where they will have become accustomed to the general day to day hustle and bustle of the house and people coming in and out. The environment they are in should be clean and 'fragrant'.



Some breeders will allow you to choose your puppy (or rather the puppy will choose you). Others may prefer to find the appropriate puppy for you having heard what your plans are for the puppy since they will have watched and interacted with the puppies for the last few weeks.

The puppies should have been checked by the vet, maybe had their dewclaws removed (front is optional, the rear ones should be removed). You will need to know what worming program has been followed and the immunisation program being proposed. Do the puppies look healthy to you? Are they happy and playful? Clean?

If you do not wish your puppy to be vaccinated at an early age then remember to discuss this with the breeder who should be happy to follow your wishes.

Find out what weaning program is being followed and what food they will be moved on to so you can carry on with that program yourself when the puppy first comes home with you.

You may want to take a toy and a blanket for your new puppy so that the puppy has something to take to his new home which reminds him of his family. If you intend to crate train

your puppy the breeder may be able to introduce your puppy to one in the familiar environment where he was born.

Since these are pedigree dogs the breeder should have already actioned their kennel club registration which will give details of your puppies registered name, breed, date of birth, colour, sex and it's sire and dam. There are usually also endorsements placed on the certificate by the breeder which will restrict breeding and export of the puppy, these can be lifted by the breeder if required but you will need to discuss these at the appropriate time.

The certificate should be handed to you at the time you pick up the puppy.



Check and see if your puppy is going to be tattooed, this is done in the ear and is a good form of identification.

Ask the breeder what support they will offer you, what they will be sending you home with,



maybe a blanket

, a toy, some food, or even a puppy!



You may also need to contact the breeder in the future to keep them up to date with your puppy's progress. f Should you wish to lift the breeding restrictions. or are unfortunate enough to have problems with your puppy, the breeder should always be your first point of contact, so make sure you have their details.

Expect the breeder to ask questions of you about your lifestyle, home, family what experience you have with dogs, what you intend doing with your Toller and why you think this is the dog for you.

Picking up your Puppy

Try and think of and ask all your questions before the day you pick up your puppy., Everything will go out of your mind on the day as the excitement will overtake you, even if you are an experienced dog owner.

Make sure you've had a few good nights sleep before picking up the puppy!

Before you leave home prepare your puppy's crate or bed area and check that you have got the appropriate food, feeding bowls, treats so you can make your puppy comfortable as soon as you are home.

If you are using a travel crate you may need some spare towels or blankets as well as appropriate things for cleaning up should you puppy be sick in the car, remember that this is a frightening experience he is leaving a familiar environment and may not have been in a car yet. Take time to let the puppy check things out before you set out. Have some water available and maybe some food as a treat. Don't forget that the puppy may need to go to the toilet if you go on a long journey.

On the day you pick up your puppy you will need to get the following certificates from the breeder:

Kennel Club Registration Document

Certificate of Vaccination (if appropriate)

Copies of the parents hip and eye documents (these may be shown on the registration document of your puppy if they have been carried out under the BVA)

National Dog Tattoo Register certificate (if applicable)

These should all be available without question.

Hopefully you will also be supplied with details of your puppies progress from birth e.g. weight, eyes opened, worming dates, some information about the raising and feeding of your puppy, a copy of the pedigrees for both parents.

At Home

Now you've finally got your puppy home, cleaned up the car and the kitchen floor, played with him or her and the puppy has fallen asleep on your lap – you are in love and can't imagine what you would do without it already.

Remember that there is plenty of help and advice out there. No question is too silly or daft. We all get worried about our puppies. Keep in touch.



HAVE FUN!