

## Getting a puppy

This guidance will provide you with information to assist when searching for a puppy, once you have decided which breed is most suitable for your lifestyle (for which there is a separate guidance document). We will consider:

1. Finding a reputable breeder;
2. Contacting a breeder;
3. Visiting a breeder;
4. Preparing for puppy's arrival;
5. Collecting your puppy; and
6. Puppy's first few months.

### Finding a reputable breeder

Start by visiting your chosen breed's Kennel Club website, to search for a reputable breeder in your area. There you can find out which breeders have a litter or are expecting a litter in the future. It is always worth waiting for a well-bred puppy even if it takes a while for a litter to be available. Some breeders are members of a Breeder Assurance Scheme, where the Kennel Club inspect them, with the scheme aiming to promote responsible breeding. A 5\* breeder's licence means they have been checked by the council and has achieved the top rating.

If you have decided to search for a Coton de Tulear, you can also contact the Secretary of the Coton de Tulear Club of the United Kingdom, who will be able to assist with reputable breeders. There is a "Contact us" option on the club website.

You can also visit local dog shows or Discover Dogs at either Crufts or Excel London (both of which have information stands with owners and dogs you can meet for each breed). Speak with as many breeders and owners as you can; Coton de Tulear owners are only too pleased to speak to you about the breed.

If a breeder has a website, does it look professional, does it provide lots of useful information to help you when choosing a litter or looking after your new puppy, do they seem genuine?

Establish what support the breeder provides once you have taken puppy home. They should be available for help, advice and education throughout the life of the puppy.

Many illegal puppy dealers use Classified Ad websites, Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms to sell illegally imported puppies from puppy farms, often from Eastern



Europe. They will pose as responsible breeders and say that the puppies are 'homebred' and provide either falsified or no documents.

A reputable breeder feels responsibility toward the breed itself, toward the dogs they breed and to the people who own dogs from their kennel. He or she spends time and money on matters they think are for the best interests of the breed, such as DNA health testing. There are a number of Coton de Tulear DNA tests to make sure that both dogs are healthy and suitable to breed from.

It is this passion and responsibility that divides the true breeder from the "puppy-raiser". The breeder is motivated to create perfection, however the puppy raisers and the dog dealers are motivated by money.

### **Contacting a breeder**

By contacting the breeder, you can ask questions that can help you identify a responsible breeder.

Ask if the seller is the actual breeder and, if not, ask where the puppies have come from. If the puppies have been imported then it is recommended not to buy from this seller as you will not be able to see the conditions the puppies have been bred in, the mother dog or meet the breeder.

Any reputable breeder will enable you to see where the litter was bred and we would always advise doing so, to ensure the conditions were good.

Ask if you can see mum; you should always be able to see puppy with its mother.

How old is mum and how many litters has she had? Mum should be at least 18 months old and no older than 8. She should have had no more than 4 litters.

Can you see father? The father may not be there, as the breeder may not own him, but it is worth meeting him if possible.

When was the puppy born and when will it be ready for its new owner? By law, puppies must not be sold until they are at least 8 weeks old. Depending on the breeder, puppies usually leave mum between 8 and 12 weeks old.

Will puppy be vaccinated? Puppies will have their first vaccination at 8 weeks and the 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccination between 2-4 weeks later so depending on when you take puppy home, you may need to organise the second vaccination.

Will puppy be microchipped? It is the breeder's responsibility to ensure puppies are microchipped before selling them and vets quite often like to microchip them at the same



time as the first vaccination. You will need to change the owner's details on the microchip when you collect puppy.

Is there a waiting list for a puppy or is there a litter available now? Reputable breeders may be in high demand so get on a waiting list as soon as possible.

Ask if there will be a puppy purchase contract and request a copy in advance (more details below).

Will you be required to pay a deposit to secure puppy and if so, what terms are attached to it if, for example if the sale does not proceed?

Ask for a list of other families who have dogs from the breeder; a reputable breeder should be willing to provide several names and numbers. Call all of them and ask if they would purchase another puppy from the same breeder.

If puppy is a pedigree dog, will it be registered with the Kennel Club and if not, why not? Breeders advertising puppies as "available without papers" at considerably lower prices should be avoided as many people discover too late that the puppy they have purchased is not what they thought they were buying or has massive health problems which can lead to significant vet's fees.

### **Visiting a breeder**

A responsible breeder will allow you to visit the puppies before you decide to buy one and they will also want to meet you and check that you are a good match for their puppies. It is best if you can meet the puppies at least once before deciding to buy and take one home.

Meeting the mother and possibly the father will provide a better idea about living with the breed, such as health and grooming. Ask lots of questions. If the breeder does not allow you to visit, this is another warning sign and you should walk away.

You should ensure that you will be collecting puppy from the breeder's house and not from another location or have the puppy delivered. By visiting the breeder's house, you will be able to see the puppy interacting with its mother and with the other puppies. Do not buy the puppy if the mother is not present or if the breeder offers to deliver the puppy.

Things to look for when visiting the breeder:

- How is the hygiene in the home and around the dogs? Some "doggy" smell is unavoidable but dogs and facilities should be clean.
- Ask about housing, where do the dogs sleep? Do they seem familiar with being in the house or do they act like this is a new environment?



- Do the mother and other dogs look well cared for? They should be well groomed, clean, bright-eyed, energetic and curious about strangers. Lethargic, bleary-eyed dogs that hardly look up when a stranger is present is likely a sign of ill-health. Puppies can be messy but extensive filth is a sign of neglect.
- Does the mother dog have a good connection to the puppies (checking in on them, licking them)?
- Check if the puppies look healthy and active. Unhealthy or injured animals may behave differently to the rest of the litter. Don't select the "sweet" or "quiet" puppy if the rest of the litter is wrestling, romping and vocalising; the subdued puppy may be feeling unwell.
- Don't select a puppy with runny eyes or nose, or a dull or matted coat, or even signs of diarrhoea.
- If there are a number of puppies to choose from, ask the breeder about their different personalities.
- Ask to see the puppy's pedigree.

A reluctance to provide information or answer questions is a warning sign; if the environment feels strange for you, trust your instincts and leave.

A responsible breeder will always want to ask a prospective owner lots of questions to ensure that their puppy is going to a responsible home. Some breeders may carry out home checks or hold an online video meeting with new owners to see the home that their puppy is going to in the future. If the breeder asks only a few questions, appears to be only interested in selling the puppy or is applying pressure for a quick sale, then walk away.

### **Preparing for puppy's arrival**

Once you have chosen your new puppy and are anticipating it coming home with you, you need to remember that your puppy will be extremely inquisitive, investigating everything in their new environment; anything within grasping distance could end up in its mouth. It is therefore wise to ensure that you do a puppy proofing exercise before your new puppy arrives. Top tips:

- Keep your rubbish bin secure.
- Cover and contain all electric cables.
- Put all your shoes, slippers, bags, purses, wallets, and remote controls out of reach.
- Ensure that any tissues are not left where your puppy can get them.
- If you take any medication, ensure that these are safely stored in cupboard well out of reach.



- Household cleaning products must be kept in secure cupboard that are not easily opened.
- If you have any house plants, check that these are not poisonous to dogs.
- If you have stairs, it might be wise to set up baby gates, or keep appropriate doors closed to prevent your puppy going to areas you don't want them to.
- Having your puppy on your lap is a great way of bonding and gives you the opportunity to check for any problems, i.e knots, long nails etc. However, your puppy is still growing so try to avoid him jumping on or off any furniture as this could damage their bones and joints. If you want to allow your puppy on to furniture then a ramp may be useful to help them getting on and off.
- Ensure your garden or outside space is secure so puppy can safely play outside. Ensure there are no gaps they can squeeze through or under.

Purchased everything you need for puppy, including:

- Harness or collar, lead and identity tag (which is a legal requirement).
- Bed and crate (if using), and blankets.
- Food (possibly the same brand puppy has been eating while with the breeder) and training treats.
- Food and water bowls.
- Bathing and grooming supplies (for which there is a separate guidance document relevant to the Coton de Tulear).
- Toothbrush and dog toothpaste.
- Puppy pads for toilet training.
- Toys – lots!
- Poo bags - even more!
- Car restraint.

Decide where puppy's bed or crate will be located as he will need his own space to retreat to for some quiet time.

There is additional information for new puppy owners including training in a separate guidance document.

### **Collecting your puppy**

The breeder should communicate with you regarding puppy collection well ahead of moving date. They should have advised you during your initial visit at what age the puppy can move to your home, remember - this must not be before 8 full weeks of age. You can then agree a mutually agreeable date and time.



You need to allocate at least one to two hours for the handover. Ideally you should plan to collect the puppy early in the day, so it can settle in your house before nightfall. If your puppy is some distance from your home, consider travelling the evening before so you can be back home in time to settle puppy. You must plan to have a suitable, securely fitted crate or carrier for the puppy to travel in, e.g. a travel crate secured with seat belt etc.

The breeder should be clear about when payment should take place; this may be cash on collection, or bank transfer/cheque before the puppy is collected. You should not expect the breeder to let you take the puppy away before payment has cleared.

Some breeders may have a contract which aims to protect both the breeder and the new owner. The contract should state:

- The name, address, and contact details for both the buyer and the seller of the puppy.
- The purchase amount of the puppy, with both parties agreeing that the fee has been paid.
- Information on the puppy itself including their microchip number.
- A health and welfare declaration where the breeder declares that the puppy is healthy, well and has been properly looked after prior to the sale.
- Details of support offered by the breeder.
- A section on the rights of return which outlines what rights of return the buyer has for the puppy and under what circumstances the breeder agrees to take the puppy back and return the purchase price.
- The breeder will usually add a caveat that they must be informed and given first refusal to buy the dog back if the new owner is unable to take care of him. This section will also usually state that the breeder will make reasonable efforts to assist with rehoming the dog if necessary.
- The date of the sale.
- A statement that both parties agree to the terms of the contract.

Ensure you understand the terms of the contract and any penalties that would be imposed if there was a violation, before the contract is signed and dated by both parties.

When you collect your puppy, you should also receive microchip details, immunisation record (with dates and types of vaccines used) and pedigree certificate (if applicable). The pedigree should show three generations or more.

Remember that a pedigree and registration papers do not guarantee health or quality so make sure the parents' health checks are up to date.



Check the details to ensure that the provided documents are complete, and no important information is missing. A responsible breeder will also provide new owners with lots of information on how to care for their puppy. This will include grooming help and feeding instructions / routine (you may wish to consider continuing the same brand and routine when you first collect puppy). If they offer to send you any of these documents only after you have bought the puppy, walk away.

Many reputable breeders will allow a short period of time (72 hours to 7 days) for returning the puppy in the same condition at the time of sale, which will give you time to have the pup examined by your own vet.

Once you've got your new puppy home, the fun begins, so spend time getting to know and enjoying your new family member.

### **Puppy's first few months**

There is a separate guide regarding help for new puppy owners, but some basics:

- Dedicate sufficient time to toilet train puppy as soon as he arrives home, including taking him out regularly during the night and as soon as he wakes.
- Puppy may cry at night during the first few days.
- Puppies have sharp teeth and could nip you or any children if he gets tired or too boisterous; supervise all interactions with children.
- Puppy may refuse to walk on a lead for a while, or if not trained properly, refuse to come back when off lead; all solvable with time and patience.
- Consider taking puppy to socialisation or obedience classes.
- If you do not intend to bathe puppy yourself and trim his nails, register with a groomer as soon as possible to get him accustomed to the unfamiliar routine.

