

Questions For Buyers to Ask Maremma Breeders

Your investment in a Maremma Sheepdog is a long-term investment. By asking these and other questions of the breeder, you can be prepared for taking on the care of one of these wonderful dogs. The breeder you are talking to should be concerned for the welfare of the puppies as well, and may have many questions for you, too.

This list of questions is not meant to be all-inclusive; however, we hope it will give you a good start on the education needed in purchasing your LGD.

1. How long has the breeder been involved with Maremma Sheepdogs and/or livestock guardian dogs?
2. How long have they been breeding Maremmas?
3. Are all of their Maremmas registered with the MSCA? If not, why not?
4. How many dogs do they have?
5. Are their Maremmas working livestock guardian dogs or pets?
6. How many livestock do they have, and what kinds?
7. Have they had previous litters? If so, when? (The MSCA does not recommend breeding a female more than once a year).
8. How old is the dam? (The MSCA does recommend breeding females before they are 2 years old and have passed their health testing).
9. What health testing has been done on the sire and dam? (The MSCA recommends at least testing for hip dysplasia before breeding. Other recommended health testing includes elbow dysplasia and heritable eye diseases).
10. What is the setting in which the bitch gives birth?
 - a. Does she whelp in the barn with the livestock?
 - b. Does she raise the puppies with the livestock?(The bonding window is from 4 to 16 weeks; pups are ideally exposed to livestock from birth.)
11. What vaccinations are given to the puppies? Puppies should have received their first core vaccinations for parvovirus and distemper before being placed. (Always consult your own veterinarian for his/her vaccine recommendations for your area). Request that the health certificate for the puppy list the brand and type of vaccine used. Labels from the vaccines can be affixed to the certificate.
12. Have the puppies been de-wormed on a regular basis? They should be regularly de-wormed with a preparation such as Strongid, Pyrantel or Panacur. Both vaccinations and de-worming are considered by the Club to be expected routine veterinary care. Request a listing of dates for both shots and de-worming and the products used.
13. Is the puppy tattooed or micro-chipped? Puppies cannot be registered with the MSCA unless they are tattooed or micro-chipped and this is the responsibility of the breeder to do so. A puppy's MSCA registration number can be tattooed in their ears. The MSCA registration number and/or micro-chip number should also appear on the puppy's health certificate, so that the pup can be matched up with its own health certificate.

14. What is the dog's pedigree? Request a 5-generation pedigree. (These are available on the request from MSCA for free for MSCA members and a \$5.00 fee for non-members. See our [Member Forms](#) page.)

15. What guarantees do the breeders provide? Do they guarantee their dogs against genetic defects? What is the guarantee (replacement, money back, etc)? Ask if they have had any genetic defects in their dogs or their dog's offspring.

16. Does the breeder provide a contract or buy-sell agreement between buyer and seller? What does it say?

17. If at all possible, pay a visit to the breeder's farm. Observe their dogs and the interaction among the owner, livestock and dogs. A tied dog indicates some sort of a problem. Ask why it's tied. Usually the dogs will be with the livestock, but some dogs float from pasture to pasture and come to see visitors (who might be unwanted intruders). Ask about these behaviors.

18. Ask for references you can call about this breeder's dogs, especially if you cannot visit the farm. Ask if you can call their vet for references.

19. The MSCA has a [Code of Ethics](#). Ask if the breeder has signed it.

Remember that the Maremma Sheepdog Club of America is here to help you in any way we can. Please don't hesitate to call or email us if there is information you need that is not found on our web site.