

(Question)

What criteria should I use in choosing my puppy?

(Answer)

No matter how much we'd like there to be some scientific method of choosing the best puppy from a litter, there really isn't any. What constitutes the "best" puppy is very subjective. What becomes of a puppy is very much in the hands of its owner. All things being equal - a sound breeding from a reputable kennel and a healthy puppy - it doesn't matter which puppy you choose. You could close your eyes, reach in, and take home whichever puppy you happened to grab and you'd have the raw material for a great hunting companion.

When I was breeding Shorthairs, I had a female who always had at least 12 puppies. Inevitably, there would be a couple that didn't sell right away, so I would start them. Every one of those puppies turned out to be fantastic dogs, even though they were the "leftovers." In my B Litter, there was a female born who weighed only 4oz at birth. She looked like a mouse. Fortunately, she was healthy, just incredibly small. With a lot of effort, I was able to keep her alive and gaining weight. By 8 weeks old, you could not pick her out of the litter as the runt. She grew to be a normal-sized dog. Her owners were hesitant to buy her because she had been the runt, but otherwise loved everything about her. Today she is an incredible hunter, wonderful companion, and the apple of her owner's eye. So, you really never can tell.

Because we are human and are programmed to like things we find attractive more than those we think are ugly, so you should pick the puppy you are drawn to. If you really like how your dog looks, it will make your bond all that much stronger. In the back of your mind you've probably already identified a puppy from the litter that you like the looks of. You're secretly hoping someone will tell you he's the "one," because you're afraid of making a mistake and picking him without some sort of confirmation that he's a good choice. My advice is - take that puppy home.