

CO-OWNERSHIPS: A CAUTIONARY NOTE

The AKC advises against co-owning dogs, stating that "Co-ownership agreements, in far too many cases, lead to problems. While AKC registration application forms provide for more than one owner, we recommend that co-ownerships be avoided. It has been our experience that purchasing a dog 'outright' is preferable."

A novice "pet" buyer, not interested in showing or breeding, can become ensnared in a co-ownership where the breeder retains "breeding rights" on the dog. This only benefits the breeder, not the person who lives with and loves the dog. Contracts that sell a puppy for a full price and also require that it be bred and that the breeder get puppies back can create a lot of extra work, expense, and heartache for the pet owner. If a buyer wants a pet, the breeder should consider early spay/neuter if the puppy is not to be bred. To do otherwise is to take advantage of someone who does not fully understand what she is getting into, and who generally comes to regret and resent this arrangement.

A different situation exists when an experienced breeder chooses to co-own a dog or bitch with a peer as a way of enlarging her accessible gene pool without having a house overflowing with dogs; but even this can turn friends into enemies. Any such arrangement requires a signed written contract, with every detail and contingency spelled out well in advance. The contract should specify the following:

- Where and with whom will the dog live?
- Who decides who will handle the dog, and what shows to enter?
- Who pays the entry (and handler) fees? Vet bills?
- Who buys the dogfood; and what kind?

More important than show plans are the breeding plans.

- What health tests should the dog have before breeding; and what test results or other health problems would disqualify the dog from being bred?
- If one co-owner feels the dog/bitch should not be bred because of temperament or health issues, and the other feels it should, how is this to be resolved?
- Who pays for any health tests/registries?
- Who gets the stud fee if a dog is co-owned, and who pays stud fees if a bitch is co-owned?
- Who decides what specific breedings will be done?
- At what age will a bitch be bred; how many times and how far apart?
- Who decides on puppy placement / gets first pick puppy?
- Who gets the money from the sale of puppies?
- Who whelps and rears the litter?

If a person fairly new to Frenchies decides after owning and learning about the breed that she would like to get a dog or bitch for showing and/or breeding, she might be better off finding someone who breeds dogs that she likes and who has ethical standards that she agrees with, and ask that breeder to help her select an animal and serve as a mentor rather than co-owning it. Don't forget that if a co-owner is suspended by the AKC for any reason, then for the term of the suspension transfer of ownership is barred, litters sired or whelped by the dog are barred, and any show wins taken at AKC-licensed events may be disallowed.