

**Submission
No 167**

INQUIRY INTO PUPPY FARMING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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I'm a 56-year-old married mother of two adult children & grandmother of two little girls. A few years ago, we purchased our dream property of almost 20 acres. A paradise for horses, dogs, cats & chooks. It's the perfect place for breeding Border Collies & that is what I do, as a recreational activity. I have a Bachelor of Science, Diploma in Education & am a Certified Canine Raw Food Specialist. I would like to share what I do as a breeder with you. You may be very surprised!

My breeding program specialises in raising Border Collies. My objective is to breed healthy and well-tempered puppies that have the health, aptitude, and temperament to go into pet homes. I go to great lengths to develop behaviourally sound puppies to become intelligent companion dogs. More and more of the puppies I breed are becoming therapy, facility and service dogs as well. What I do reaches beyond pedigree research, sound breeding practices and health testing. It extends into how I raise my puppies. Raising puppies is an art as well as a science. In recognising this I aim to raise puppies with the best opportunities to become confident, stable, resilient dogs who handle the stresses and challenges of modern life. This takes time, expertise and considerable investment. To do so I use Puppy Culture raising, training and socialisation protocols. I devote almost as much time to educating and preparing my new puppy families as raising their puppies. I am ethical, responsible, reputable and legitimate in all that I do.

To achieve my objectives, I subject our breeding dogs to rigorous health and temperament testing and I raise our puppies on my advanced curriculum. This exposes them to enriching experiences appropriate to their developmental stage. I use temperament testing to provide information that will allow me to help my new puppy families understand their puppy and incorporate them into their lives.

Dogs have an amazing ability to fill a need in our heart. They have a way of healing our emotional pain, of making us feel their unconditional love, of accepting us faults and all, of showing us that we can have trust in them, of giving us confidence when we need it, and of having the ability to assist us with our medical needs in a very different way than machines can. They share their gifts with us during our happy times, during our darkest times, when we are healthy, and when we are unhealthy. When we reflect on how much they freely offer to us, the most essential thing we can do for them in return is to help them grow into confident, healthy, and happy puppies. This requires both good genetics and being raised in a safe and enriching environment with their needs being met at each stage of their life.

There are many theories on the way to raise puppies appropriately and to what should or should not be in a puppy raising curriculum. Some theories have been scientifically proven while others have been gathered from personal experience. It is our belief that both have incredible value. My puppies are raised in accordance to my personal experiences, my goals, and from my learning, I am constantly analysing and refining my breeding and training programs.

All of my puppies are raised using my advanced puppy curriculum. This specialised and targeted curriculum allows me the opportunity to provide families with alert, friendly, fearless, inquisitive, happy and healthy puppies. I am aiming to maximise the potential of each puppy by stimulating their learning ability, nerve strength, and natural instincts. My curriculum of daily learning exercises and evaluations was put together from years of my own education and experience and from training from specialists in the fields of breeding, obedience, and animal behaviouralists.

I strive to raise my puppies in an enriching environment. Studies have shown that puppies raised in enriched environments tend to have more brain cells and neural connections, an improved ability to learn and remember, greater emotional stability, and better resistance to stress. Since I want only the best for my puppies, I provide my puppies with adequate space to exercise, a

stimulating living area with various sounds and textures, as well as opportunities to problem solve.

I assist my "Mums" in caring for their puppies from birth. Beginning on Day Three, puppies begin Early Neurological Stimulation (ENS) exercises. Exercises require handling puppies one at a time while performing a series of five exercises. The handler starts with one puppy and stimulates it with the following exercises:

1. Tactical stimulation (between toes)
2. Head held erect
3. Head pointed down
4. Supine position
5. Thermal stimulation

In addition to ENS exercises, puppies undergo Dr. Gayle Watkins Early Scent Introduction protocol. Each day we present each puppy with a new scent. According to research, dogs that are taught and engage in scenting have a more optimistic attitude toward life and have fewer behaviour problems.

At around two weeks of age, the puppy's eyes and ears begin to open and they begin to be more aware of their environment. Puppies have the physical ability to startle, however do not yet feel the emotional fear response associated with startling. Startle recovery exercises begin during this age and include exposure to loud noises such as: food bowls being dropped, blow dryer, vacuum cleaner, cabinets closing, and other household noises.

Enrichment activities begin at three weeks and include opportunities to experience objects with varied sounds, textures, and the ability to manipulate the objects. Puppies will play with items such as: water bottles, boxes, soft, crinkly and squeaky toys, a folded tarp, mats with different textures, tins containing various scents, balls of multiple sizes, objects with wheels, and opportunities to climb and stand on elevated objects.

Our advanced puppy curriculum also includes:

Beginning toilet training with the puppies at three wks. old:

- artificial grass mat/wood shavings tray
- pen/kennel training
- crate training.

Proper behaviour around humans and their clothing:

- Voluntarily sitting to say please (manding)
- Not jumping on or biting at feet/shoes
- Exposure to various clothing (hats, glasses, coats, etc.).

Beginning basic obedience training at seven/eight weeks:

- Introduction to marker words
- Leash exposure
- Introduction to the clicker.

All exposures and training with the puppies are kept positive. Puppies are closely monitored in order to gather information and to assist puppies with support as needed. My goal is for each puppy to have positive quality exposures that will assist them in becoming healthy and confident

puppies. I want them to feel safe and secure in their environment and have the understanding that people are loving, caring, and can be trusted.

Between six and eight weeks of age, temperament (or aptitude) testing is conducted to evaluate the puppies' stable traits (assertiveness - with humans and dogs, motivation, energy level, prey drive, human focus and tender-heartedness) and adjustable traits (confidence, nerve strength/resiliency, touch tolerance, sound sensitivity and sight sensitivity). The curriculum I implement assists in influencing our puppies' adjustable traits. It helps create confident puppies that are brave and bounce back quickly when startled, that are compliant with being touched, and adapt to new sounds and sights well because we work hard from a young age to desensitise them to stimuli that might frighten puppies at a later age. The puppy evaluations allow us to determine what things the puppies still need help with or are sensitive to. It also allows us to establish where individual puppies' talents are and the kind of home that would help them thrive. Aptitude testing allows new families to have greater understanding of their puppies, setting them up for success.

My puppies begin to join their new families after eight weeks of age. Fear in puppies usually increases rapidly during the seventh week therefore, separating puppies from their littermates, leaving with strangers, being placed in a new home and exposed to new situations can be overly traumatic prior to this time. Research by Scott and Fuller has shown that dog to dog socialisation is not complete until eight weeks of age, so placing puppies in a new home without continuing exposure to dogs, can make meeting and coexisting with new dogs a challenge. They are registered with MDBA, have commenced toilet training and crate training, have been microchipped, vet checked, wormed and vaccinated at 6 to 8 weeks of age. My adult dogs all have full genetic profiles completed. This screening allows us to be sure that our puppies cannot suffer from tested genetic diseases. Careful consideration of ancestries allows us to breed away from health issues.

Puppies come with an extensive puppy pack including variable items such as: dietary and welfare information, worming treatment, shampoo bar, a blanket that smells like mum, toys, nail clippers, collar & lead, bandana, brush and bowl. My puppies are accompanied by 6 weeks of free pet insurance. Most importantly I offer a lifetime of breeder support. I will always accept puppies back, but have only ever done this once, due to serious, unexpected illness of the new owner. When a puppy enters the world, into my home, through my hands, they become part of my heart forever. They are always "my" puppies. My breeding program is built around health and welfare, not designer colours.

My curriculum is evaluated and adapted with each litter so activities done with one litter may not be identical to activities done in another litter. Every litter is unique and treated as such. Some litters may need to move at a different pace than other litters and my curriculum is adapted to accommodate this.

The joy that a healthy, well raised puppy brings to well prepared families is beyond description. I have many families who have chosen over time to incorporate more than one of my puppies into their family. There is one who accompanies her owner who is a nurse working with severely disabled bedridden children several times a week & is making marked differences to the life of those children. Another is the light in a family's life, as he is the perfect companion for their severely disabled teenage son & also their very competent daughter. One of my puppies accompanies a nursing home groundkeeper to work & brightens up the days for the residents with dedicated time with them. I was selected as a breeder by a professional dog trainer who handled the Border Collies in the old movie "Babe". Her dog frequents TV commercials, Aldi

ads etc. She chose me as I raise my puppies on a fresh food diet & an advanced curriculum. It's not uncommon for "Dads" in families to try to remain aloof regarding a new puppy, but many of ours have actually been instrumental in helping some of those men overcome depression. Then there are those single people or retired couples who have chosen the ideal companion. I must mention the families with children who have been able to successfully bring one of our well raised puppies into their families with love & joy. I believe that all of these people have the right to choose a well raised, healthy puppy to join their families. They should not have to choose a canine companion from a shelter, where dogs have often not been well raised as puppies & often also have health issues. Thousands of people in this state do not want a second-hand dog! Not everyone is equipped to take on a shelter dog. Afterall, they are in shelters for a reason.

Consumers should have the right to purchase a breed of dog that suits their lifestyle. The puppies I breed are predictable & suitable for families. I also give lifetime support.

Just because I choose to be a dog breeder, does not mean I do not care for the welfare of my dogs, puppies or puppy families. I love what I do! Being able to provide families with "dream" puppies brings immense joy to both the families & to me. As a breeder I should still have property rights, like everyone else. I should have privacy rights, like everyone else & I should have the right to natural justice.

I hope that you can tell that I am not a puppy farmer, but without a definition of a puppy farmer, who is to know that! This Bill potentially means that rarely will consumers be able to purchase a family companion, rather they will have to re-home from an animal shelter, if there are any dogs up for re-homing. My wait time for a puppy is currently almost 4 years. All of the reputable breeders I associate with have similar wait times. This state needs excellent breeders, not the removal of rights. Education, not legislation is the key to animal welfare. Please do not pass this Bill.