

The “P” Word

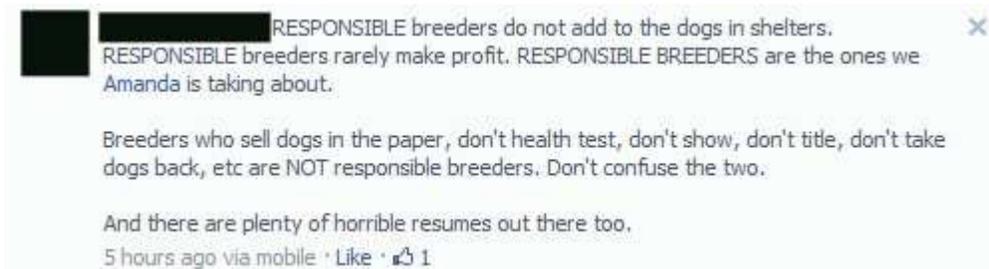
by Farm Dog on November 17, 2013

After filling out mundane online job applications for five hours today I finally came across a job listing that looked interesting to me.

The job advertised a full-time job working with puppies. Tasks included feeding, checking for health issues, cleaning up after the puppies, training basic commands, providing socialization, interviewing potential owners, and choosing appropriate homes for each puppy in the litter. As I scrolled down the list of recommended experience, required licenses and courses, and various other side tasks that may be involved such as website maintenance, drafting applications and contracts, and transporting the puppies to the vet clinic for vaccinations I started thinking that this job sounded like a lot of work.

And then I saw it. Minimum starting salary: \$0

Wait- free? I thought I’m doing a job search here. I checked the task list again, read over the job requirements, and did a double take on the salary. \$0 per hour, per year, per decade. Who in the right mind would accept this kind of responsibility for no pay?



Though there are plenty of things I would love to discuss about the screen capture above I am particularly interested in the dreaded “P word”. **Profit.**

Responsible dog breeders don’t make a profit.

The fact that the proposed measure of being a successful dog breeder is losing money baffles me.

I understand the train of thought applied to this message because I used to think the exact same way (see the “Evolving Activist” post from a few days ago). If a breeder is making a profit, they will surely cut corners and the dogs in their care will suffer. Bitches will be bred every season in order to maximize puppy production. Cages will be smaller, kennels will be understaffed, food will be cheaper, and the puppy approval process will become easier to pass.

I was convinced that this is the case until it occurred to me that good people don’t become bad people because they start making money doing what they love. As a professional pet sitter, I didn’t start overbooking appointments and spending less time with my client’s dogs just because I was getting more inquiries than I could handle.

Responsible dog breeders should make a profit.

I can’t imagine working as hard as dog breeders do and, in the end, being told that I don’t deserve to be paid because of the nature of my job. I know the overhead of dog breeding is the primary reason why it is difficult to make a profit. But if you balk at the price of a \$1,500 puppy, take into consideration the cost of training, showing, and promoting the bitch and sire of the litter. Think about the grooming, whelping, veterinary, and training supplies. Vet fees, kennel licensing and health tests are potentially the most expensive part of raising a litter of puppies. A c-section can cost the price of two puppies. The overhead costs for breeding are steep. And that isn’t taking the time and effort spent by the breeder into

consideration. Most of us believe we are worth at least minimum wage. Dog breeding is a 24-hour job for eight to twelve weeks.

A few months ago, a friend sent me her total costs for one litter of puppies:

The True Cost of Responsible Dog Breeding

Health tests (OFA, CERF, vWD, cardiac & thyroid, Optigen for PRA) - \$430
Pre-pregnancy check up ~ \$80
Brucellosis test ~ \$60
Stud Fee ~ \$1800
Travel to/from stud ~ \$840
Increased food ~ \$200
Mid-pregnancy check up \$80
Whelping box - \$120
Fleece blankets \$32
Towels \$24
Other supplies (gloves, lube, floss, paper collars, oxytocin) \$45
Exam and X-ray to determine # of pups \$100
Vet check for dam/pups ~ \$60
Dew claws \$7 per foot x 28 feet ~ \$196
Puppy formula ~ \$12
Puppy food for 10-12 weeks ~ \$200
Puppy toys ~ \$30 Puppy Pens ~ \$200
Advertising ~ \$75
Puppy shots - 7 x 18 ~ \$126 (included 6 week check up)
Wormer \$20
Increased electricity (space heater) laundry, laundry soap, gas to/from vet etc... \$100
Newspaper to line pen ~ \$20
Puppy potty pads ~ \$120
Registration ~ \$40

Total Cost

\$4980

This does not include the time spent away from work (thousands of dollars depending on where the breeder is employed), the cost of hiring somebody to sit with the puppies at all times, and the cost of sleepless nights waiting for the litter to arrive.

Nor does this include the cost to show the dog in conformation or various working venues before breeding, and the cost of training, travel, and registration fees involved.



LoveResponsibleDogBreeders

Though it is possible to make a profit from breeding if the litter of puppies produced is large enough, the net income is typically substantially lower than what one would make working a minimum wage job. Which begs the question, where do people get the idea that dog breeders are breeding solely for the money?

I suppose there are some breeders who have no trouble turning a profit because they produce a higher number of puppies per year. It is my opinion that there is no maximum number of litters per year that is right for one breeder. I have a friend who has four litters a year because they just really enjoy raising puppies and their dogs are so in demand that they have no problem finding loving homes.

This, of course, opens up a whole other controversy about whether dogs from breeders are filling a potential home for a shelter dog. More on that in another post.

Consider this the next time you try to tell somebody that only irresponsible dog breeders make a profit:

There is no reason why any of us should have to work for free to do what we love.