When you begin your search for a puppy please consider the following:

- A dog's personality is largely determined by its surroundings, its mother when it is a puppy, other dogs in its pack, and of course the people who love and care for it. This learning process begins at approximately three weeks of age. When this process concludes is a matter of debate. We have all heard the old proverb, "You can't teach old dogs new tricks." I have found this to be untrue. You can teach old dogs new tricks, but it can be really, really, hard. Make no mistake, where your puppy comes from is important.

- Is it reasonable to believe that a person, no matter how hard they try, or well intending they are, can maintain a kennel of fifteen to fifty dogs, and give each dog enough personal attention so that it is comparable to the dog that was born to a family pet and raised as a family pet.

I am not saying that you cannot get a beautiful healthy puppy from a breeder who keeps more than a few dogs. I am saying that the more dogs a breeder has the less likely that your puppy will be home raised, and that could be the difference between having a little dog, or having a little buddy.

If you are determined to find a puppy that is truly home raised you should look for the following.

- All the dogs kept by the breeder as well as their litters are housed in the living area of the residence. All of the dogs should be spending the majority of their waking hours with the family.

- All the dogs, including the mother of the puppies, should be happy, friendly, and absolutely jazzed about having company.

- The puppies should appear happy, healthy, inquisitive, playful, and well mannered.

- The home should be clean. The dogs should be reasonably clean. Be fair, a dog may go out for a potty run and roll in skunk poop two minutes before you ring the doorbell. If the house or dogs are normally unkempt you will know, your nose will know.

If during your search for a puppy you encounter any one of the following,

- Something about the breeder sets off alarm bell in your head.

- The dogs and/or the puppies are filthy, unfriendly, sick, listless, or appear unhealthy, show evidence of fleas, dirty ears, runny purulent eyes, scabs or open sores, or bald patches on the coat.

- The breeder is unable to produce the parents of the puppies. The mother should always be available; however a breeder may use an off-site stud.

- The house, the room where the dogs are housed, or the kennel, is visibly filthy or smells of feces or urine.

You should leave without a puppy. Listen to me. No matter how sad, pitiful, or pathetic that puppy is, no matter how much you hate to leave that poor little puppy in that place, leave the puppy there.

Ask for references, make sure that all of your concerns and question are addressed to your satisfaction, listen to that little voice in your head, listen to your nose.

I recommend several pre-purchase visits. You are certainly welcome here. Meet and play with the dogs that will be producing your puppy. If you like what you see, consider placing a deposit and patiently wait for your puppy.