

**Sunday Column – Purebred
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Who doesn't love Golden Retrievers? For some it is the Doberman that captures the heart. Others are attracted to the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel for his hypo-allergenic coat.

I'm a dog person but my favorite dog is by far, the American mutt. There is no end to the variations of size, color, shape, coat, and personality. Mutts of all types have been my companions throughout my adult life.

Researchers believe that several pure bred lines are now endangered due to genetic defects caused by decades of inbreeding. The various defects affect fertility, litter size, puppy mortality and vigor. It can also increase the incidence of fatalities from cancer, heart defects and other medical issues.

According to Carol Beuchat, Ph.D. of the Institute of Canine Biology, our favorite dogs are "dying of inbreeding." She asserts that this can't be fixed by scientists. It can only be fixed by the breeders themselves, who she believes are not getting the message despite "the increasing number of research papers being published" on the topic.

Dr. Beuchat's blog published in June, 2016 identifies dilated cardiomyopathy as prevalent in Dobermans and that by 2020 72% of those born will become a prey to heart failure. Doberman's are not the only dogs predisposed to health problems. If you are interested in a specific breed I would urge you to do some research before making a decision. You may otherwise risk having your heart broken by the unfair and untimely death of your beloved pet.

I have several friends who are breeders. They do it for love of the breed and I believe they are responsible breeders. Even so the pool is small and there will be times when the level of inbreeding is going to exceed medically sound limits.

As the director of an animal shelter, the demand for purebred dogs pains me. Depending on which estimates you subscribe to, 3 – 4 million unwanted companion animals are euthanized in American shelters every year. Though we are making tremendous progress in reducing the euthanasia rate in several regions of the country I wish more people would consider adopting from their local shelter.

As I write this we have two sets of adorable puppies on the adoption floor at PAWS Humane. Alex and Piper are 2 ½ month old Chihuahua mixes, one black and one white. They were brought into PAWS for re-homing after their owner died. Teenie and Halo, known in some circles as the Hurtsboro puppies, are tan and white 2 month olds who are simply described as large mixed breed dogs. If you really think you have time to raise a puppy these are all great candidates for adoption.

We also have Jan Jr., a one year old brown and white medium sized mixed-breed dog. Animal control picked her up as a stray and no one came to fetch her during the five day stray hold. PAWS Humane brought her in and she is as sweet a dog as you will find.

Then there is 12 year old Suki, a small brown and white mixed breed. His owner died and the housekeeper kept him for the past four years. Now she is no longer able to care for him. He is fully house-trained and he is a very affectionate little guy.

All my adopted pets have held a special place in my heart and I miss those who have passed on. It is a tragedy that so many animals in our animal control system don't ever get homes while prospective adopters buy newly minted purebred puppies from retail stores.

Bobbi Yeo lives in Opelika, AL. She is the CEO of PAWS Humane in Columbus, GA, an animal shelter and veterinary clinic offering low-cost spay/neuter and other services to the public. Email her at byeo@pawshumane.org with your comments and story ideas.