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The Cost of Ethical Breeding

Back and forth, back and forth, my legs swung as I sat on the bench. My mind was cluttered with anxious thoughts and speculations. I believed I already knew the results, but until those dreaded words exited her mouth, hope remained. The vet tech entered the room without a smile.

“I’m sorry, no puppies.” She handed me my dog’s leash.

Those words extinguished every inkling of hope. People often require vets to conduct an x-ray to check for something wrong with their pet. When they are told the vet does not see anything, they breathe a sigh of relief. For me, I had thousands of dollars resting on the hope that there would indeed be something on that screen. I was looking for puppies. At fifteen years old, I started my own dog breeding business, investing a significant amount of money to provide people with healthy, happy, and heartwarming pets. As I sat in the vet’s office taking in this news, I found myself facing a difficult task. I needed to inform my families that they would not be receiving a puppy this spring despite their expectation to the contrary. In addition, my newly drained bank account would remain depleted.

A few months later, I needed to health test another one of my dogs to discover if I could breed her. If she failed, I would lose more money. If she passed, however, I would have the possibility of healthy puppies in the future for my waitlist families. Nevertheless, I was taking a risk spending a large sum of money that might

not be recouped. I paced my living room and mulled my next steps. I walked to the right and considered the benefit, then I walked to the left and considered the risk. I remembered the last time I ventured funds and lost. Was this chance really worth taking? An evil thought invaded my unsuspecting mind. Did I have to health test her? Who would know the difference? Did it really matter? Therein lay the ethical dilemma. Would it be right to the future puppies, or to the people who would purchase them, to skip this expensive health test? The answer is simple. My conscience knew. I care too much about my dogs to risk breeding unhealthy puppies. I also refuse to lie to my clients. The health guarantee I promise has to mean something.

When I hand a puppy to an excited kid and ask him, “What are you going to name her?” I want to do so knowing that I did everything I possibly could to breed a puppy with the best temperament, genes, and health in the Valley. To accomplish this, a trustworthy breeder must spend money she might never earn back. To be ethical can be costly, but to be unethical costs more in the end.