

Buying a Bracco & Questions to Ask a Breeder

Welcome to the world of the Bracco Italiano! If you've made it to this page, you're probably thinking about adding a Bracco Italiano to your family. There are several things to consider when adding a new dog to your family.

Key Points:

- The Bracco Italiano needs daily physical and mental exercise to be happy and to avoid destructive behaviors.
- Mentorship is available through BICA to aid Bracco owners in getting their dogs involved in field work. A hunting Bracco is a happy Bracco!
- The best breeders will have their dogs proven in the field and show ring, and they will be invested in the wellbeing and future of the Bracco Italiano breed.
- The Bracco Italiano Club of America recommends hip, elbow, eye, and kidney testing of dogs prior to breeding.
- Good breeders act as mentors and provide support for the full lifetime of the dogs they produce.
- Waiting for a puppy is a good thing! Wait lists are often a sign that a breeder is selecting for quality, not quantity.
- Be honest with your breeder about your plans for a puppy so you can be matched with the dog that is best for your family and situation.

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1. Is the Bracco Italiano a good fit for me?

The Bracco Italiano is a large breed of versatile bird dog. They have a strong hunting instinct. This means that they are high energy and require a job to be happy. Ideally, that

job would include hunting birds. Field training and hunting is the best way to meet the breed's needs. The Bracco Italiano Club of America has a list of mentors to aid owners getting their dog started on birds. A hunting Bracco is a happy Bracco.

A minimum of 1-2 hours of moderate exercise every day is needed to keep a Bracco fit. With daily mental and physical exertion, they are playful and affectionate family companions. When their needs are not met, their drive can be redirected to destructive and unhealthy behaviors, such as chewing, incessant barking, shadow chasing, and digging. They thrive on human companionship and love to be close to their people. This means they do not do well when left alone for long periods of time.

The Bracco Italiano is friendly with children and other pets, but (as with any breed) proper socialization and introductions are necessary.

This is a large and active breed of dog. Males can weigh as much as 90 pounds. They need adequate living space. They do best with a large yard with room to run off leash every day. Some Bracchi are loud ("talking" or barking), which can be difficult to manage in close living spaces. Generally, the Bracco Italiano is not a good fit for apartment or townhouse dwellers.

Grooming is minimal for the breed, but they do shed. Frequent brushing can reduce, but not eliminate, shedding. The breed has pendulous lips and most drool. Their large feet (and love of the outdoors) often means that dirt is tracked inside the home. The right home will be prepared to embrace (and clean up) the shedding, dirt, and drool.

The breed is predisposed to certain health problems. It is best practice to have pet insurance or a savings fund for your Bracco Italiano, as veterinary care (especially for emergencies or major procedures) can be expensive. Skin allergies, which can be severe, and chronic ear infections are common in the breed. Routine ear cleaning and wrinkle maintenance is important for their health. Other common health concerns include hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia, eye disorders (entropion, ectropion, and cataracts), and kidney disease (renal amyloidosis). These issues can be screened for in breeding dogs, and it is important to ask your breeder what health testing is done.

Any family considering a Bracco Italiano should have the time, space, and schedule to commit to their dogs every day. Without this commitment, both the dog and the family will likely be unhappy. It is important to be honest about your capabilities and limitations when bringing a new dog into the home.

It is important to choose a dog breed that fits your lifestyle, rather than assuming you will change your lifestyle to fit the dog. When their family is prepared and committed to meet their needs, there is no better companion than the Bracco Italiano.

2. What makes a breeder “good” or “bad?” And how do I tell the difference?

Prospective owners should consider their goals for a new puppy when choosing a breeder and selecting a dog. **A good breeder will be invested in the wellbeing and future of the breed.** This means that their primary goal in having a litter is to improve the Bracco Italiano breed. They will be involved in breed organizations (such as BICA, but also other local/regional dog clubs), hunting, showing, and other dog sports.

A good breeder will be sure that their dogs are tested to have natural hunting ability, fit the breed conformation standard, and are healthy. The best breeders have their dogs proven in the field and show ring.

All breeding dogs should be healthy and under routine care of a veterinarian.

The Bracco Italiano Club of America recommends hip, elbow, eye, and kidney testing of dogs prior to breeding. A responsible breeder will make sure that these tests are performed and have satisfactory results. Dogs with evidence of hereditary diseases (those listed below) should not be bred. The test results should be freely available to anyone looking to purchase a puppy, and breeders should be happy to answer any questions you have regarding their results.

The hip testing evaluates for hip dysplasia and can be done through [PennHIP](#) or [OFA](#). These tests require a veterinarian to take x-rays of the hips and send them to the testing organization for evaluation. PennHIP is considered a more objective measurement, however, requires more specialized training and is not as widely available as OFA. OFA provides elbow screening as well, which is a similar process and evaluates the dog for [elbow dysplasia](#). PennHIP and OFA have different ages at which the tests can be performed.

[Eye testing](#) is primarily done through OFA (previously CERF). The dog is evaluated by a veterinary ophthalmologist (eye specialist). Abnormalities in the eye or eyelid are noted on the test form. The most common issues seen in the Bracco Italiano include entropion (eyelid curled inward), ectropion (eyelid folding outward), and cataracts. Dogs must be at least one year of age for the eye testing to be completed.

[Kidney health testing](#) is recommended within six months of breeding. This helps screen for, but does not eliminate the risk of, kidney disease (specifically renal amyloidosis). Dogs should have bloodwork (including creatinine) and urinalysis with urine protein testing performed prior to breeding.

Brucellosis testing is also routinely recommended by veterinarians for all breeding dogs.

A good breeder will abide by the [Bracco Italiano Club of America Code of Ethics](#). They will aim to produce high quality dogs and will be selective in their breeding practices. This often means that they likely have a waiting list for puppy buyers. Waiting for a puppy is a good thing! Breeders who always have litters are likely breeding for quantity, not quality.

Kennels should be clean, and the dogs should be visibly healthy (good body weight, shiny coat, no visible wounds, or parasites). Good breeders will include their dogs as part of their everyday lives and families, and the dogs will not always be confined to kennels. They will have a socialization program to ensure every puppy they place is well adapted.

A good breeder will want to ask prospective owners questions about their lifestyle to ensure their puppy will be a good fit. They will have a contract detailing the responsibilities of both the breeder and new owner. Good breeders act as mentors and provide support for the full lifetime of the dogs they produce.

Prospective owners should make every effort to meet the breed in person before making the decision to purchase a Bracco Italiano. If they can visit their breeder in person that is ideal, but not always possible given the wide geographic distribution of this breed. A good breeder will be honest with potential puppy buyers if they think the family is a good fit for their dogs. If a breeder says they do not think you are a good fit for the breed, it is best to strongly consider this feedback before moving forward with adding a Bracco Italiano to your family.

3. What questions should I ask a breeder before purchasing a puppy?

Health & Health Testing

- What health testing do you have on your dogs, and can I view the results?
- Can you discuss any health or temperament issues you have seen in your dogs?
- Do you provide a health guarantee for the dogs you sell, and what does it include/exclude?
- What preventative care (ie: de-worming, vaccinations, health certificates) do you provide for your puppies?

Registration

- Do your dogs have pedigrees from AKC, NAVHDA, or FCI that go back at least three generations?
- Will my puppy come with registration for AKC, NAVHDA, or FCI?

Breeder Experience & Involvement

- How long have you been breeding dogs?
- How long have you been breeding Bracchi Italiani?
- What other breeds do you currently breed (or have bred in the past)?
- Do you hunt with your dogs or show them in conformation?
- What other dog sports or activities are you involved in?

- Are you involved in the BICA or other dog breed organizations?
- How many litters do you have each year (on average)?
- How many dogs do you own?
- How many dogs that you bred have achieved hunting or conformation titles?
- Can you provide references?

4. How do I select the best breeder (and best puppy) for me?

A breeder is not just a person who sells you a puppy. **They should be mentors and partners for the life of your dog.** You should feel comfortable that the breeder will support you to the best of their ability in your new life with a Bracco Italiano.

Breeders should be able to answer the questions above (or ideally have a lot of the information freely available on their website or advertisement listing). You should be welcome to visit their home and dogs if location allows. They should be eager to share information about how their dogs live, their breeding philosophy, and puppy rearing practices.

Choosing the best puppy should be a combined decision between the breeder and prospective owner. The new owner should be honest about their plans for the puppy and what they want in a family companion.

For example, are you a seasoned hunter who is looking for your next bird dog or will this be your first sporting dog? Do you want to start showing dogs, or have you owned several champions in the past and want to continue with a Bracco? Do you have plans to breed this dog, or will they be spayed/neutered?

The breeder will evaluate their puppies to decide which is the best fit for your family. Most responsible breeders play a role in deciding which puppy will go to which family. They have watched the puppies grow from birth and know their strengths and weaknesses. Meeting a litter for the first time, it's easy to find "love at first sight" (Bracco puppies are so cute!), but often the best bonds come from careful selection.

The "pick of the litter" may not be the best pick for YOU. Each puppy has a unique personality that will make them best suited for one family over another. Your breeder should be able to help guide you to find the puppy that is perfect for your situation.