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Selective breeding Selection.

As the world has evolved, so too has the number of animals in the wild. When animals evolve in nature, this process is known as natural selection and only the strong and the best survive.

As such only the best genetic information is passed from one generation to the next – Mother Nature's perfect plan for evolution.

However, there is another method of ensuring that a specific breed of dog has specific characteristics such as size, conformation, coloring, behavior patterns and specific traits and so on.

This is selection in breeding, which is a form of "artificial evolution."

While this process follows the same concept as natural selection, man gets involved and forces the changes to occur at a different pace - in some cases the time frame is shorter, in others, it's longer.

While "selection in breeding" may result in a "better" dog, it comes with a high risk of many problems and also health problems because of the folly of man.

Looking at some common health problems that can occur in dogs which have been selectively bred.

Price of perfection breeding.

Selection in breeding may result in more "perfect" breed of dog, but according to vets it also leads to a number of common medical problems that could easily be avoided by choosing breeders who practice better breeding habits and worry more about the health of their puppies than they do about "perfect" looks. *(See line breeding article on this website).*

Conformation faults have a genetic carryover to new generations.

Unacceptable with selecting in breeding.

Ears – Uneven pricked or each pointing in a different direction.

Eyes - Bulging eyes –different color eyes – round eyes – squinting eyes – exaggerated haw - some breeders will avoid blue eyes.

Feet – flat pasterns – splayed toes – in or out pasterns bowed legs.

Tail – curled over tail – gay tail – kinked tail – bobbed tail.

Walking difficulties.

There are several breeds of "pedigree" dogs that are bred specifically for their looks, such as Alaskan Malamutes and German shepherds and other that have and may end up with walking difficulties due to selective breeding. The most of common of these is hip dysplasia, which is caused by an abnormal formation of the hip joints. Others include elbow dysplasia and chondrodystrophia, which occurs when the cartilage grows and matures at a faster than normal rate.

{*Chondrodystrophy* (literally, "cartilage maldevelopment") refers to a skeletal disorder caused by one of myriad genetic mutations that can affect the development of cartilage.

As a very general term it is only used in the medical literature when a more precise description of the condition is unavailable.}

This condition makes the bones fuse together faster than they would normally, resulting in stunted growth, something that is actually sought after in many breeds.

But at the same time, it can result in spinal injuries that are extremely painful and may also lead to neurological problems.

Also to take in consideration -

Breathing difficulties.

There are a number of breeds with very short muzzles that have difficulty breathing due to what is referred to as brachycephalic airway obstruction syndrome (BAOS). This is caused when the muzzle is very short due to the skull being shortened while the muzzle tissue has not been. This can cause the dog's nostril openings to be much smaller and narrower than they should be.

Birthing difficulties.

There are a number of breeds that face difficulties during the birthing process, to the point at which the only way they can give birth to their puppies is through caesarian section. This typically occurs in dogs that are bred for their big head, wide shoulders, and narrow hips.

This combination leads to a condition in which the head and shoulders are too wide for the puppies to pass through the pelvic canal.

Major eye problems.

You might be surprised to learn that selective breeding causes a number of very serious eye diseases. Among these are entropion, corneal trauma/ulceration, and progressive retinal atrophy (PRA). Entropion. Entropion is a condition in which the eyelids fold inwards, rubbing the surface of the eye and causing irritation and damage. It is very common in dog breeds with wrinkled faces such as Shar Pei, bulldogs, English mastiffs, and bloodhounds.

Corneal trauma and ulceration. This occur when erosion occurs to the outer surface of the dog's eyes. This is common in dogs with shorter muzzles as their eye sockets are shallower, resulting in bulging eyes that are more prone to injury. PRA covers a range of genetic eye diseases that can cause slow retinal degeneration and a loss of vision that ends in blindness.

Severe skin issues.

There are a number of breeds that are naturally predisposed to severe skin issues, especially those with wrinkles.

However, selective breeding has caused these wrinkles to become more prominent, which can lead to folding, infection, & inflammation. Others are more prone to skin allergies and ear infections due to elongated ears.