

My name is Dragica Hunter, and I am a responsible Maltese breeder.

Backyard operators, who breed dogs with only the most limited knowledge of matters relating to the health, genetics or temperament of these dogs – and without much concern, I might add – and puppy farm mills, those large scale, commercial breeding facilities that raise puppies as they might livestock, and call them their cash crop... these, under the current law, are also referred to as breeders, just as I am. And to the unsuspecting dog lover, searching for a pet, we are all, unfortunately, in the one pool, regarded as one and the same. But in truth – and it should be immediately apparent but it obviously is not – the difference between “them” and “us” or “me” is huge.

Responsible breeders – and I count myself among them – are anxious to learn and to remain informed and knowledgeable about disorders in their breed, significant new developments, what screening tests should be performed... for that matter, anything that might affect the health and well-being of their dogs. Although there is no enforcement as such, ethical breeders follow recommendations. My own puppies come from lines that have gone through rigorous health screenings. In this way I am assured, not only of their own immediate well being, but of a healthy gene pool that will be transmitted to the next generation of puppies.

Irresponsible breeders – those backyard operators, those puppy-mill operators – do not, and are not going to, spend money screening their breeding stock; nor, frankly, is it in their interests to do so. The one and single reason for their facilities to exist is to make a profit. Little care or concern for a dog's health. The dogs are there to produce as many puppies as possible, and to do so as cheaply as possible.

The responsible breeder does not breed dogs purchased at auction, but from a pool of dogs renowned for their physical characteristics, their movement, their gait, their temperament. These are the qualities that determine how closely a particular dog measures up to the breed standard. Such dogs will have undergone the trials – called dog shows – which are specifically designed to display purebreds that retain the ideal characteristics of their respective breeds. The knowledgeable breeder will use the pedigrees of such dogs to better the breed itself.

Bettering the dog that she or he loves then, becomes the singular aim of those of us who are responsible breeders. Unlike the large commercial breeding facilities and their outlets – the pet stores that sell puppies, the internet puppy commerce – responsible breeders are not in it for profit. They may have other sources of income, which offer them the time and opportunity to champion the dogs they love. And they scarcely need the law to define what is permissible, or what the minimal conditions might be under which dogs can be raised. They go well above and beyond what one would imagine breeders would and should provide.

The responsible breeder raises one or two breeds that he or she loves, and is exceptionally knowledgeable about those particular breeds. Invariably, he or she will strive to learn all

that one can about ways to improve the breed and, as a novice, will almost always work under the auspices of a Master Breeder; I do. My own mentor has spent some 30 years raising champions, and is recognized as the leading Maltese breeder not only in the USA, but in the world.

Responsible breeders raise only a limited number of dogs, and breed only for show. They are raised in environments that foster their best possible development. We do not sell our puppies to the pet stores, or on the internet. We screen – and very carefully – whoever may be the future owner of one of our puppies to make sure, to whatever degree possible, that the puppy will never be put in harm's way.

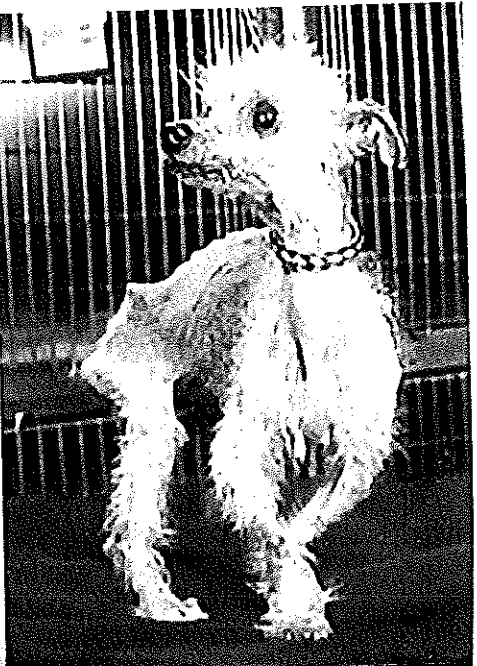
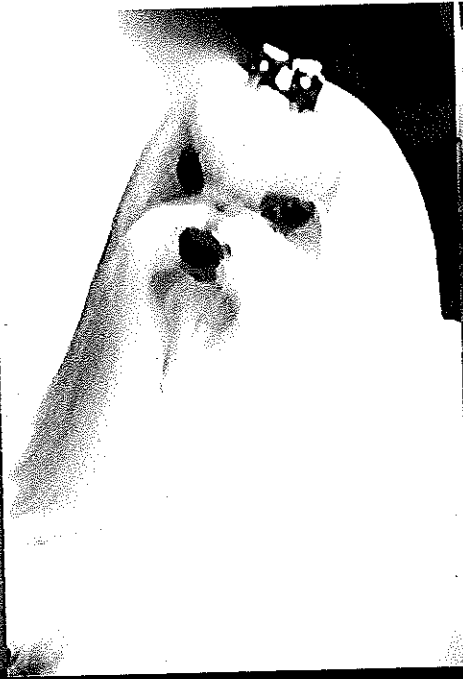
In the case of my own puppy adoption contract there is a clause that states that the future owner must return the puppy to me if, for any reason, he or she cannot care for it. My puppy cannot be resold to a third party, or be adopted by a person of whom I do not approve. It must never be given to a shelter. If the home where it has been adopted can no longer provide proper care for it, it must be returned to me, no matter how old or how sick it may be.

How many such contracts, I wonder, are offered by the pet stores of America, with those litters of puppies in their windows?

Thank you.

# MALTESE

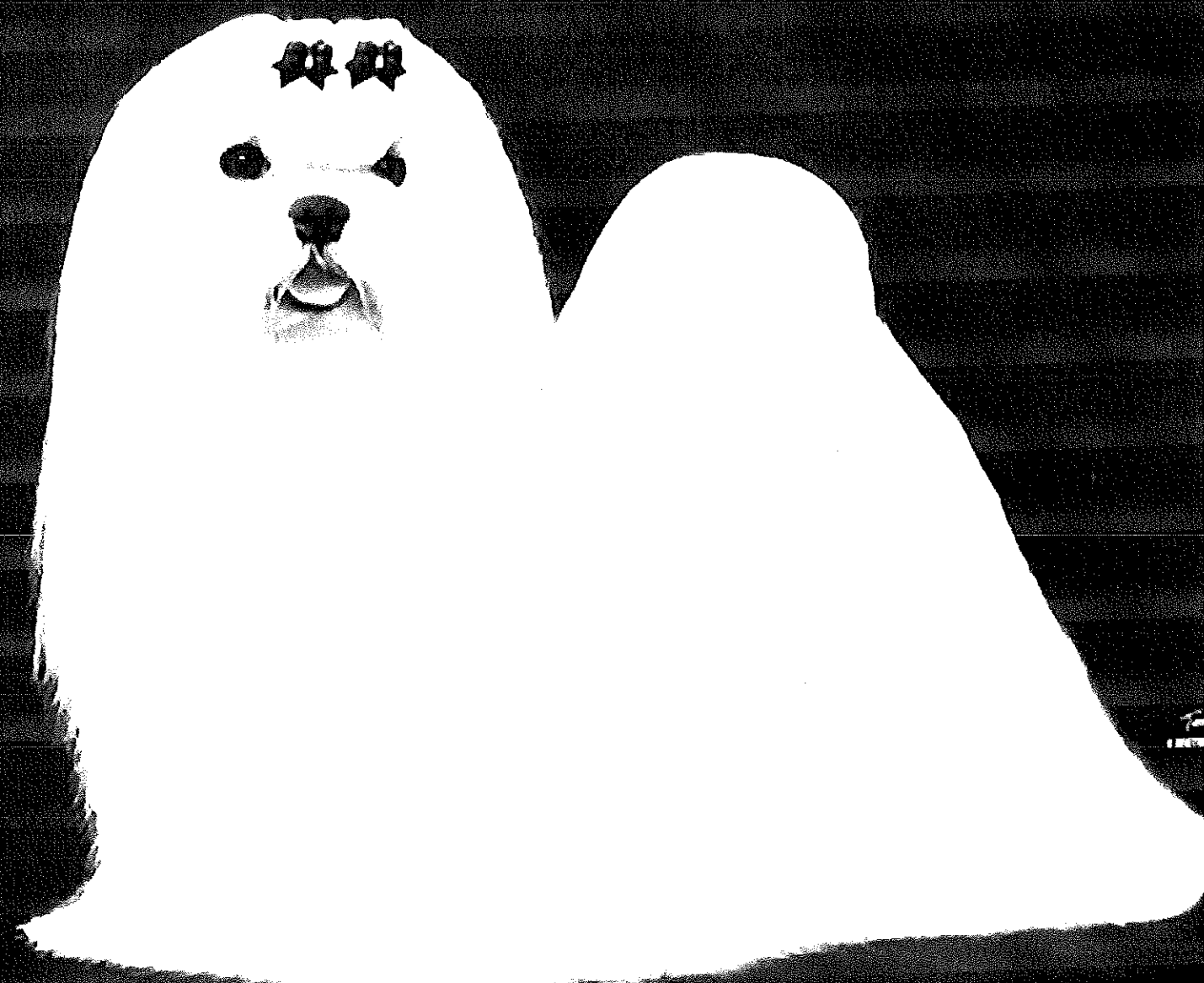
raised by "them" and "us" or "me"



MALTESE, 6 years old male



MALTESE, 6 years old male





MALTESE, 6 years old male

