

Guardian Homes: What are they & why might you want to consider becoming one?

What are “guardian homes?”

Guardian homes are the living spaces in which our contracted dames and studs stay for the majority of their time. What that means is that our guardian dogs are placed with loving families who will love and care for them while they are not breeding. For studs, this is where the dogs live permanently, only needing to leave when needed for breeding or testing. For dames, the dog will live with the guardian most of the time, however, they will return to the breeder when they've reached sexual maturity and can be bred. They return to the guardian for the next 7 weeks and if pregnant, they will come back to the breeder to give birth and nurse the puppies until they are ready to be weaned. Typically, pups are weaned by the 6th week, and the dame can go back to the guardian family. Guardian dames are contracted for a maximum of 4 successful breedings, at the discretion of the breeder. Dames are retired at or before they reach 4 years of age. Guardian studs can be contracted until they are 6 years old and then they are retired. The guardian will initially pay full price for the puppy but will be fully reimbursed at the end of the contract. The details of each contract will be specific to the guardian dog being placed, accounting for age, previous litters, etc.

What is the benefit of having guardian homes?

Guardian homes contribute to the betterment of the breeding world by allowing breeders to expand their kennels without compromising the quality of life for any of the breeding dogs. As reputable breeders, we are greatly opposed to puppy mills, which are often a result of too many dogs being held in kennels, greatly reducing the quality of life for the breeding dogs and pups. Guardian home placements help to minimize the number of dogs being kept at the kennel at a time, which ensures that the dogs who do live at the kennel are given the space and attention they deserve. Meanwhile, the guardian dogs are placed in homes where they are loved and treated like family during the time they are not breeding. When they return to the breeder for mating and whelping pups, they are provided the same love and care as our own pets. Happy, healthy dogs make happy, healthy pups!

Why might a guardian dog be right for you?

Aside from helping to contribute to reputable breeding, guardian placement has a few benefits for the contracted homes.

- We pick the puppies for guardian homes based on their ideal qualities and characteristics. These are considered the “breeders pick” of the litter.
- While all of our puppies have familiar testing done for DNA and a variety of breed-associated conditions, they are considered “pet quality.” Our breeding dogs are tested individually, as their parents were before breeding. The guardian home dog will

have a full genetic panel completed by the time ownership has been turned over to the guardian.

- Once the contract has been fulfilled, we will compensate for the spay or neuter of the dog, which you will have full ownership of from that point forward. (See terms of the contract for details)
- You will be reimbursed for the initial cost of the dog once the contract is fulfilled.

Guardian Home FAQ:

Q: Why shouldn't I just breed the dog myself?

A: There are a few reasons why we discourage our customers from breeding puppies they've purchased from us. The first reason being that all of our dogs are homed with the initial agreement that owners will not attempt to breed themselves. Why? Well, breeding isn't as simple as it might look on the outside. Proper testing must be done to ensure that dogs used for breeding are top quality. Reputable breeders have knowledge regarding which tests are necessary and how to arrange for them. Additionally, we are able to selectively breed for desirable traits, based on our knowledge of DNA, size, and coloring. Failure to properly select favorable mates can have potentially fatal results. For example, breeding two dogs holding the merle gene can result in a pup with the "double-merle" gene, which can cause blindness, deafness, and other potentially severe/fatal health issues. A reputable breeder is aware of these types of genetic conditions and can breed selectively to avoid them.

At Berkshire Goldendoodles, we have been building our knowledge since our first litter bred in 2005, and are the longest-standing goldendoodle breeders in the Berkshires. This knowledge and experience, as well as the time and money spent on testing, is what sets us apart from backyard breeders.

Q: Who pays for the guardian dog's vet bills and general needs?

A: The breeder pays for any vet bills having to do with breeding, as well as the cost to spay/neuter and all medical and DNA testing. The guardian is responsible for all regular veterinary costs and daily care, such as annual checkups, food, toys, crates, etc.

Q: What are my responsibilities as a guardian?

A: Guardians are expected to provide the proper every-day care for the pup placed in their home. For dames, guardians must notify the breeder when the dog comes into heat for the first time and every time after. While we would never breed a dog during their first heat cycle, it is important for us to keep track of each cycle so that we can plan future litters. Dames typically experience 2 heat cycles per year, or every 6 months. Once we have an indication of the dame's cycle, we can predict their future litters and often plan up until their retirement. This helps the guardian to be aware of what to expect in their dog's future.

Additionally, guardians must be cooperative with following the breeding schedule, as well as allowing for the breeder to coordinate the proper testing for the dog. The breeder will give as much notice as possible regarding any reason for taking the dame or sire, however, sometimes studs are needed under short notice, and we expect that the guardian will cooperate by allowing us to take them as needed. Because dogs have such precise reproductive cycles, it is important that guardians follow the breeder's instructions closely and be willing to accommodate the needs of the kennel.

Q: What do we require of aspiring guardians?

A: The process for becoming a guardian home is actually fairly simple. The requirements for guardians are as follows:

- You must pass our initial application process, including our online form and a phone interview.
- You must live within 1 hour driving distance from our location in Pittsfield, MA.
- You must agree to follow the breeder's plans regarding tracking, mating, and testing. Typically this just means that you will simply allow us to take the dog as needed. The breeder may request up to 50% of the dog's travel needs to be provided by the guardian for breeding purposes.
- You must thoroughly read and agree to the Guardian Home Contract, which includes the legal ramifications pertaining to guardianship.

If you think you might be a good fit to become a guardian home for one of our pups, please ask us for the application, which we will review and discuss with you. If we believe you are a good match, we will send over the contract for you to review.

We thank you for your interest in helping to maintain the integrity of reputable breeding!

Sincerely,
Katrina Clukey
Manager, Berkshire Goldendoodles