



### *I am a breeder*

My food receipts for a family of 7 and my dog food bills match.

My water bill has doubled.

My electric has tripled.

It is I, a breeder, who when my fridge quit, saved the dog meds and let the food go bad.

My feet find the way to the kennel before I have even grabbed a cup of coffee in the morning, and the kennel is my last stop before bed. While my friends are on a cruise to the Bahamas and my family meets for Christmas I am home delivering puppies.

I haven't had a real vacation in 7 years, but maybe soon. All plans are made around heat dates, whelp dates and Vet dates. I shower and 10 minutes later my grand kids say I smell like a dog.

My clothes are all stained with fecal matter, urine, afterbirth or bleach.

I have to remember to clean my shoes before church.

Most of my friends breed dogs. Who else can you call at 3 am for support?

Who else has the experience I sometimes need, the meds I sometimes need, or just an uplifting word I sometimes need? Who else would understand how it feels to have invested hours and hours and hours in a weak puppy to lose it? Or the joy in investing hours in one that lives?

I have slept on the floor beside a litter until the crucial 2 weeks have passed. I have bottle fed a litter of 12...feeding every 2 hours and it taking 90 minutes to do for weeks at a time. I have learned to be proficient at micro chipping, vaccinations, sub-Q fluids, bottle feeding and tube feeding.

My Vet knows my first name. The Vet knows my children. The Vet knows my grand children.

My Vet knows it was I who added the wing to the Vet clinic.

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It is to me that 63 days takes on a new meaning still excited by every new life. It is I who delivers all my pups, towels and heat lamps ..., happiness and sadness sometimes intermingled. Even though it increases my work load, I look forward to the 10 day stage when eyes open, and puppies begin to emerge from the helplessness of newborns. Puppy breath, a first bark, and a heart of exploration. I am not uneducated, unemployable, illiterate or lazy as some Animal Rights folks would imply of breeders. I am a conscientious lover of animals and I have found my niche.

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And although I feel no shame, there is a part of me that feels the need to hide from powers that could come to invade my home and take my dogs...maybe for finding a mild infraction, a leaf in the water dish? A kennel not yet cleaned for the day? A rash I am home treating? I tell my children and grand children to hush, do not tell others we are dog breeders, and I wonder when did breeding puppies go in the same secret place as criminal activity?

I am a breeder and I am not cruel, dumb, uncaring or criminal. I am not raking in money while sitting on my butt. Every penny I make I earn through blood, sweat and tears, and any profit made goes back to the dogs. My greatest joy is a healthy puppy and a wonderful home. The cards of thanks and the pictures of my puppy with its new family is the fringe benefits of my efforts. I am an animal lover, nurse, midwife, heavy laborer, customer service representative, and marketer.

AND

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