

You might have noticed that I just lost my dear doggie companion, friend and family member in August of 2011. This article is about losing your 4-legged best friend, and the decision to find another furry friend. There is rarely a more difficult decision than finding the time to let your best friend go to Rainbow Bridge. <http://rainbowbridge.com/>

So, how do you know? In my own circumstance, I knew in my heart my dog was going downhill, yet I continued to try to find reasons that it would be okay. I tried everything from better treats, to considering a new pillow for his crate, finally ended up with the pain meds many of us are familiar with, Rimadyl & Tramadol. When it was obvious to me that his pain was beginning to be unbearable, and when I watched him making the rounds between his family members to say goodbye, it became more realistic to let him go. So, for me at least, the realization that he was in pain, and that I was keeping him here for ME, not for him, was the decision-making moment. It was still so hard, and was with my 2 yellow female Labs before Clifford. There is nothing you can do but go through the process of grief and recrimination, finally you find some peace.

Then, comes the question, "do we get another dog?" (or cat, or companion). I've heard people say, "we just aren't ready", and I understand that concern. On the other hand, I've had folks say, "why not go ahead, you have all the supplies and are ready to go!". I think it's a matter of personal choice, and a family decision as well, plus there might be other pets to consider. In my case, I believe that I'll know when I find the right choice as a new family member, so I'm keeping my options (and my heart) open to possibilities.

A few observations I've made about the search for a new companion, things have changed a lot in the 10 years since I last looked for a puppy. The internet has become a useful tool for finding litters anywhere in the U.S., but do you want to buy a puppy sight-unseen? To find a litter close to your own location is a bit tricky, I've found out.

<http://puppysites.com/>

This is a site I've found useful, because it lists all the breeds, including the "champagne mixed-breeds" such as the Labradoodle. You can also click on the "location" tab and find litters in your own state. If you choose this option and buy a puppy from a breeder (professional or hobby), this will cost some money. I've found puppies range from \$300 - \$2500! Always go and visit the place the puppies have been raised, and meet the mom and dad if possible. Visit the puppies a few times, until they are ready to come home at 8 weeks of age.

If you choose to go the rescue route, there are other precautions you can take as well. Again, a good policy is to visit the dog (or cat) in the home they've been raised in, you gain several advantages this way. You can observe the dog in it's own environment, first see if the dog barks or is aggressive in any way when you arrive. Notice any signs of furniture destruction in the home, and if the dog is restrained while in the house in any way. Also, a trip into the backyard might help you notice holes under the fence or other signs of destructive tendencies.

If you choose to go the shelter route, you will put your trust into your instincts about the animal, whatever history the shelter has been able to gather, and any return policies the shelter offers. If you have another pet at home, be very careful that the pet from the shelter isn't carrying any health issues home from the shelter, such as fleas for example.

As I continue my search, I will update this page of my website. Hopefully I'll be able to upload a picture of a brand new 4-legged furry friend soon! Thank you for your attention. Patti

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Update!! Puppies in the house, as of September 24th, 2011, Joy Reigns Again.

Click below to view a slideshow of Tom & Jerry and read further to hear more of their story!

[<iframe src="http://media9avo.onlineview.it/Slideshow.aspx?gallery=1196693&mt=Photo" height="430" width="530" frameborder="0" scrolling="no"></iframe>](http://media9avo.onlineview.it/Slideshow.aspx?gallery=1196693&mt=Photo)

The avenue I chose was to go to the people I have the most trust in when it comes to pets, so I wrote a letter to the Vet that I used for Cliffy. I also sent emails to my two favorite pet food and treat stores. I asked them to keep their eyes open for puppies, or young dogs available.

It was only a few days later that I heard from my Vet (Chatfield Vet Hospital), there was a woman from a rescue group at the clinic with 3 puppies. Needless to say, I broke some speed records to get there and met these pups! Once I saw them, and the realization hit me that I wanted BOTH of them, I was pretty much hooked.

These pups were from a litter of 3, they were with their mother, a purebred Schnauzer named Rocky, in a hot garage in Kansas in July. Some kind person finally suggested they be given to rescue, so they ended up with Vintage Dog Rescue at 2 weeks of age. The great thing about dealing with a rescue group, is there is plenty of documentation and concern for the future of the dog. I felt very comfortable with this aspect, plus they were taken care of, neutered and chipped, at my very own vet.

Tom & Jerry are just wonderful! I wondered at my wisdom in getting 2 puppies at once, but it's been the best puppy experience I've ever had. They challenge each other, entertain each other, and comfort each other, which all means they are very happy and content. I won't say they are potty-trained yet, but the fact there are 2, means the messes we've had aren't too bad!

There was nothing that was going to fix the pain of losing Clifford, it was only being able to pour our hearts and souls into our new canine companions that finally offered any relief.

Keep checking back for more stories, and ongoing puppy news!! Thanks so much, Patti