

Article 26

Tell me why....

I get certain questions asked of me repeatedly, so I thought I would share a few from my teaching classes.

Should I bring my dog to the dog park to mingle, romp around, and play with other dogs?

Your dog is a member of a pack that includes you and any other family members. Meeting with non-pack members should be while under your control and on a leash, not while running loose, excited with other dogs.

You have no way of knowing how other dogs, or – even your dog may react to other pets at dog parks.

You also have no way of knowing whether the other dogs carry a communicable disease. I generally don't recommend the dog park for these reasons.

Should I spay or neuter my pet? I think she should have a litter to propagate the bloodline, or perhaps develop a new breed.

Unless your dog is a rare breed, I wouldn't worry about propagating the bloodline, since there are probably numerous dogs of the same lineage.

It is much healthier for your dog to be spayed or neutered. Spaying and neutering do not cause your dog to become fat or lazy, and actually may reduce unwanted behavior, such as urine marking.

How can I select the right breed? It seems as if the people I know who show their dogs know everything there is to know about the breed.

Going to shows can be a good way to see a large number of breeds, but remember, this is a very controlled environment and you probably won't learn much about a breed's temperament at a show.

You can research breeds in general through the American Kennel Club, and also talk to breeders about the characteristics of breeds you like. For example, a terrier, which is a very active breed, would not be a good match with a very sedentary individual.

Dog trainers also can tell you a great deal about the breeds.

And that's the next frequent question—

Where should I purchase my new pet? The local pet shop at the mall has some cute puppies.

Although there are many responsible and humanely run pet shops, you will not usually know the lineage or parents of a puppy sold there. And both basic temperament, such as shyness, and inherited disabilities, such as the frequency of hip problems, come from the lineage.

Responsible breeders will have the health records of the parents and you should be able to see the parents so that you see the temperament your puppy would be inheriting.

And don't forget the local animal shelters-many times you can adopt a young adult dog, and know what you are getting in terms of size and temperament.

I hope this helps.

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BACK