

Corsos Are NOT for everyone

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1 This article is a must read for any prospective Cane Corso owner. There are different breeds for different needs. There are over 200 purebred breeds of dogs in the world. And as you may have already heard a Cane Corso is not for everybody. This breed is best suited for a confident, dedicated, experienced and consistent owner.

As a breed they have a few features that some people find charming, that some people find mildly unpleasant and some people find down right intolerable.

So it is very important that you do your research and self-reflection before deciding on a breed that suits you and your family. This article is not to deter you but to help you figure out if a Cane Corso is right for you and your situation.

DON'T BUY A CANE CORSO IF YOU ARE ATTRACTED TO THE BREED *CHIEFLY* BY ITS APPEARANCE.

The appearance of the Cane Corso you have seen in the show ring can be quite impressive. This large majestic powerful breed can move effortlessly with such elegance that it leaves you speechless. But this large beautiful dog doesn't come without lots of work due to their protective instincts and discerning nature time is most dedicated to socialization and obedience. The Corso often possesses a dominant behavior and may challenge the role of leader among their human family and canine pack. This breed is best suited for a confident, dedicated, experienced and consistent owner.

IF YOU ARE UNWILLING TO SHARE YOUR HOUSE AND YOUR LIFE WITH YOUR DOG.

Cane Corsos were bred to share in the work of the farm family and to spend most of their waking hours working with the family. They thrive on companionship and they want to be wherever you are. They are happiest living with you in your house and going with you when you go out. While they usually tolerate being left at home by themselves (preferably with a dog-door giving access to the fenced yard), they should not be relegated to the backyard or kennel. A puppy/dog exiled from the house is likely to grow up to be unsociable (fearful and/or unprovokedly aggressive), unruly, and unhappy. He may well develop pastimes, such as digging or barking, that will displease you and/or your neighbors. If you don't strongly prefer to have your dog's companionship as much as possible, enjoying having him at your feet and sharing many of your activities by day, you should choose a breed less oriented to human companionship.

IF YOU DON'T INTEND TO EDUCATE (TRAIN) YOUR DOG.

Basic obedience and household rules training is NOT optional for the Cane Corso. As an absolute minimum, you must teach him to reliably respond to commands to come, to lie down, to stay, and to walk at your side, on or off leash and regardless of temptations. You must also teach him to respect your household rules: e.g. is he allowed to get on the furniture? Is he allowed to beg at the table? It is **critical** that you, not the dog, make these choices and that you enforce your rules consistently. You must commit yourself to attending an 8 to 10 week series of weekly lessons at a local obedience club or professional trainer and to doing one or two short (5 to 20 minutes) homework sessions per day. As commands are learned, they must be integrated into your daily life by being used whenever appropriate and enforced consistently. Young Cane Corso puppies are relatively easy to train: they are eager to please, intelligent, and calm-natured, with a relatively good attention span. Once a Cane Corso has learned something, he tends to retain it well. Your cute, sweet little Cane Corso puppy will grow up to be a large, powerful dog with a highly self-assertive personality and the determination to finish whatever he starts. If he has grown up respecting you and your rules, then all his physical and mental strength will work for you.

But if he has grown up without rules and guidance from you, surely he will make his own rules and his physical and mental powers will often act in opposition to your needs and desires. For example: he may tow you down the street as if competing in a sled-dog race; he may grab food off the table; he may forbid your guests entry to his home.

This training cannot be delegated to someone else, e.g. by sending the dog away to "boarding school", because the relationship of respect and obedience is personal between the dog and the individual who does the training. This is true of all dogs to greater or lesser degree, but definitely to a very great degree in Corsos. While you definitely may want the help of an experienced trainer to teach you how to train your dog, you yourself must actually do the training. As each lesson is well learned, then the rest of the household must also work with the dog, insisting he obey them as well.

Many dogs that are rescued from Pounds and Shelters show clearly that they have received little or no basic training, neither in obedience nor in household department; yet these same dogs respond well to such training by the rescuer or the adopter. It seems likely that a failure to train the dog is a significant cause of Cane Corso abandonment. And once again this breed is best suited for a confident, dedicated, experienced and consistent owner. If you don't intend to educate your dog, preferably during puppy hood, you would be better off with a breed that is both small and socially submissive.

In the opposite direction, if your goals in obedience training are oriented towards success at high-level competition the Cane Corso excel at such working competitions as agility, carting, tracking, protection and herding.

IF YOU LACK LEADERSHIP (SELF-ASSERTIVE) PERSONALITY.

Dogs do not believe in social equality. They live in a social hierarchy led by a pack leader (Alpha). The alpha dog is generally benevolent, affectionate, and non-bullying towards his subordinates; but there is never any doubt in his mind or in theirs that the alpha is the boss and makes the rules. Whatever the breed, if you do not assume the leadership, the dog will do so sooner or later and with more or less unpleasant consequences for the abdicating owner. Like the untrained dog, the pack-leader dog makes his own rules and enforces them against other members of the household by means of a dominant physical posture and a hard-eyed stare, followed by a snarl, then a knockdown blow or a bite. Breeds differ in tendencies towards social dominance; and individuals within a breed differ considerably. Cane Corso as a breed tend to be of a socially dominant personality. You really cannot afford to let a Cane Corso to become your boss. You do not have to have the personality or mannerisms of a Marine boot camp Sergeant, but you do have to have the calm, quiet self-assurance and self-assertion of the successful parent ("Because I'm your mother, that's why.") or successful grade-school teacher. If you think you might have difficulty asserting yourself calmly and confidently to exercise leadership, then choose a breed known for its socially subordinate disposition. If the whole idea of "being the boss" frightens or repels you, don't get a dog at all. Maybe a Cat would be a better choice they don't expect leadership.

Leadership and training are inextricably intertwined: leadership personality enables you to train your dog, and being trained by you reinforces your dog's perception of you was the alpha.

IF YOU DON'T VALUE LAID-BACK COMPANIONSHIP AND CALM AFFECTION

. A Cane Corso becomes deeply attached and devoted to his own family. Some are noticeably reserved, others are more outgoing. They like to be near you, usually in the same room, preferably on a comfortable pad or cushion in a corner, just "keeping you company". They enjoy conversation, petting and cuddling when you offer it. They love the attention and sometimes demand it in their subtle little way, it may be a sit and stare, nudge of an elbow with a nose, lay their head in your lap or even a lean into the leg. They are emotionally sensitive to their favorite people: when you are joyful, proud, angry, or grief-stricken, your Cane Corso will immediately perceive it and will believe himself to be the cause. The relationship can be one of great mellows, depth and subtlety; it is a relation on an adult-to-adult level, although certainly not one devoid of playfulness. As puppies, of course, they will be more dependent, more playful, and more demonstrative. In summary, Corsos tend to be sober and thoughtful, rather than giddy clowns or sycophants. A number of breeds retain into adulthood a more puppyish and playful disposition. Quite a few are far more dramatically demonstrative and/or more clingingly dependent. I

IF YOU ARE FASTIDIOUS ABOUT THE NEATNESS OF YOUR HOME.

The Corso loves playing in water and mud combine to make him a highly efficient transporter of dirt into your home, depositing same on your floors and rugs and possibly also on your furniture and clothes. One Corso coming in from a few minutes outdoors on a rainy day can turn an immaculate house into an instant hog wallow. Drool follows from his jowls after a drink of water, and then releases same drippingly across your floor or soppingly into your lap. You can expect if your Corso is allowed in the dining area that he will sit politely as taught as you consume your dinner. But the wonderful aroma of you dinner will set off his saliva glands and the drool string race will begin. Although Corso have short hair they do shed and blow out their coat twice a year.

I don't mean to imply that you must be a slob or slattern to live happily with a Corso, but you do have to have the attitude that your dog's company means more to you than does neatness and you do have to be comfortable with a less than immaculate house.

IF YOU DISLIKE DAILY PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Corsos need exercise to maintain the health of heart and lungs and to maintain muscle tone. Corsos will not give himself enough exercise unless you accompany him or play with him. An adult Cane Corso should have a morning outing of a mile or more, as you walk briskly, jog, or bicycle beside him, and a similar evening outing. For puppies, shorter and slower walks, several times a day are preferred for exercise and housebreaking. All dogs need daily exercise of greater or lesser length and vigor. If providing this exercise is beyond you, physically or temperamentally, then choose one of the many small and energetic breeds that can exercise itself within your fenced yard. Most of the Toys and Terriers fit this description.

IF YOU BELIEVE THAT DOGS SHOULD RUN "FREE".

Whether you live in town or country, no dog can safely be left to run "free" outside your fenced property and without your direct supervision and control. The price of such "freedom" is inevitably injury or death: from dogfights, from automobiles, from the Pound or from justifiably irate neighbors. Even though Corsos are home-loving and less inclined to roam than most breeds, an unfenced Corso is destined for disaster. Like other breeds developed for livestock herding, most Corsos have inherited a substantial amount of "herding instinct". Which is a strengthened and slightly modified instinct to chased and capture suitable large prey.

The unfenced country-living Coros will sooner or later discover the neighbor's livestock (sheep, cattle, horses, poultry) and respond to his genetic urge to chase and harass such stock. State law almost always gives the livestock owner the legal right to kill any dog chasing or "worrying" his stock, and almost all livestock owners are quick to act on this! The unfenced city Corso is likely to exercise his inherited herding instinct on joggers, bicyclists, and automobiles. A thoroughly obedience-trained Corsos can enjoy the limited and supervised freedom of off-leash walks with

you in appropriately chosen environments. If you don't want the responsibility of confining and supervising your pet, then no breed of dog is suitable for you.

A neutered cat will survive such irresponsibly given "freedom" somewhat longer than a dog, but will eventually come to grief. A better answer for those who crave a "free" pet is to set out feeding stations for some of the indigenous wildlife, such as raccoons, which will visit for handouts and which may eventually tolerate your close observation

IF YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO BUY, FEED, AND PROVIDE HEALTHCARE FOR ONE.

Corsos are not a cheap breed to buy, as running a careful breeding program with due regard for temperament, trainability, and physical soundness (hips especially) cannot be done cheaply. The time the breeder should put into each puppy's "pre-school" and socialization is also costly. The "bargain" puppy from a "back-yard breeder" who unselectively mates any two Corsos who happen to be of opposite sex may well prove to be extremely costly in terms of bad temperament, bad health, and lack of essential socialization. In contrast, the occasional adult or older pup is available at modest price from a disenchanted owner or from a breeder, shelter, or rescuer to whom the dog was abandoned; most of these "used" Corsos are capable of becoming a marvelous dog for you if you can provide training, leadership, and understanding. Whatever the initial cost of your Corsos, the upkeep will not be cheap.

Being large dogs, Corsos eat relatively large meals. (Need I add that what goes in one end must eventually come out the other?) 6 A large dog tends to have larger veterinary bills, as the amount of anesthesia and of most medications is proportional to body weight. Spaying or neutering, which costs more for larger dogs, is an essential expense for virtually all pet Corso, as it "takes the worry out of being close", prevents serious health problems in later life, and makes the dog a more pleasant companion. Corsos are subject to hip dysplasia which can be costly to treat.

Finally, the modest fee for participation in a series of basic obedience training classes is an essential investment in harmonious living with your dog; such fees are the same for all breeds, though conceivably you will need to travel a bit further from home to find a training class teacher who is competent with the more formidable breeds, such as Cane Corsos. The modest annual outlays for immunizations and for local licensing are generally the same for all breeds, though some counties have a lower license fee for spayed/neutered dogs. All dogs, of whatever breed and however cheaply acquired, require significant upkeep costs, and all are subject to highly expensive veterinary emergencies. Likewise all cats.

IF YOU WANT THE "LATEST, GREATEST FEROCIOUS KILLER ATTACK DOG"

. Although the Cane Corso capability as a personal protection dog and as a police dog has been justifiably well publicized, and occasionally dramatically over-stated, the Corso is not any more capable in these respects than are half a dozen other protection breeds. Nor are all Corso equally

capable: some are highly so and some moderately so, but many have insufficient natural capacity for such work. The Corso is perhaps somewhat more amenable to control by the handler and somewhat more willing to refrain from biting or to stop biting when told to do so.

Whatever the breed, before the dog can be safely protection trained, he must have great respect for the leadership of his handler and must be solidly trained in basic obedience to that handler. Equally essential, he must have a rock-solidly stable temperament and he must also have been "socialized" out in the world enough to know that most people are friendly and harmless, so that he can later learn to distinguish the bad guys from the good guys. Even with such a dog, safe protection training demands several hundred hours of dedicated work by the handler, much of it under the direct supervision of a profoundly expert trainer. Please don't buy any dog for protection training unless you are absolutely committed to the extreme amount of work that will be required of you personally. Also talk to your lawyer and your insurance agent first. 7 In contrast to the protection-trained dog, trained to bite on direct command or in reaction to direct physical assault on his master, the "deterrent dog" dissuades the vast majority of aspiring burglars, rapists, and assailants by his presence, his appearance, and his demeanor. Seeing such dog, the potential wrongdoer simply decides to look for a safer victim elsewhere. For this job, all that is needed is a dog that is large and that appears to be well trained and unafraid.

The Corso can serve this role admirably, with the added assets of the deep rumble in the voice and 100 plus pounds of pure muscle a "bestial" appearance adding to the impression of formidability and fearsomeness. If the dog has been taught to bark a few times on command, e.g. "Fang, watch him!" rather than "Fifi, speak for a cookie", this skill can be useful to augment the deterrent effect. Other breeds of dog, which are equally suitable for protection or for deterrence, include the Doberman, Rottweiler, German Shepherd, Briard, Belgian Sheepdog, Belgian Tervuren, and Belgian Malinois.

IF YOU WANT A TOTALLY ASSERTIVE CONFIDENT PROTECTOR.

Most Corso have an assertive and confident personality. When confronted with a threat, a proper Corso will be more ready to fight than to flee. Thus he will take on the role of protector in situations where many other breeds back down. Most Corsos have some inclination to protect and repel intruders on their territory (i.e. your home) and to counteract assaults upon their pack mates (you and your family). Without training and leadership from you to guide him, the dog cannot judge correctly whom to repel and whom to tolerate.

Without training and leadership, sooner or later he may injure an innocent person who will successfully sue you for more than you own. With good training and leadership from you, he can be profoundly valuable as a defender of your home and family. (See also remarks on stability and socialization above.) If you feel no need of an assertive dog or if you have the slightest doubts of your ability and willingness to supply the essential socialization, training and leadership, then please choose one of the many breeds noted for thoroughly unaggressive temperament.

IF YOU ARE NOT WILLING TO COMMIT YOURSELF FOR THE DOG'S ENTIRE LIFETIME.

No dog deserves to be cast out because his owners want to move to a no-pet apartment or because he is no longer a cute puppy or didn't grow up to be a beauty contest winner or because his owners through lack of leadership and training have allowed him to become an unruly juvenile delinquent with a repertoire of undesirable behaviors. The prospects of a responsible and affectionate second home for a "used" dog are never very bright, but they are especially dim for a large poorly mannered dog. A Corso dumped into a Pound or Shelter has almost no chance of survival -- unless he has the great good fortune to be spotted by someone dedicated to the breed. The prospects for adoption for a youngish, well-trained, and well-balanced Corso whose owner seeks the assistance of the nearest Corso Club or Rescue group are fairly good; but an older Corso has diminishing prospects. Be sure to contact your local Cane Corso club or Rescue group if you are diagnosed as terminally ill or have other equally valid reason for seeking an adoptive home. Be sure to contact your breeder or local Cane Corso club if you are beginning to have difficulties in training your Corso, so these can be resolved. Be sure to make arrangements in your will or with your family to ensure continued care or adoptive home for your Corso if you should pre-decease him.

The life span of a Corso is from 10 to 12 years. If that seems too long a time for you to give an unequivocal loyalty to your Corso, then please do not get one! Indeed, as most dogs have a life expectancy that is as long or longer, please do not get any dog!

In Conclusion

If all the preceding "bad news" about Corsos hasn't turned you away from the breed, then by all means **DO GET A CORSO!**

They are every bit as wonderful as you have heard!