

Article 35

Careful decision-making is important when you choose a new canine addition to your household

I've been asked many times: "How can I select the proper dog for me, my family, and my children?"

This is a question that I'm always happy to get, even though the answer requires an awful lot of information and knowledge.

If properly thought through, your new family member could be with you for 15 years so this initial choice becomes so important. Likewise, if the decision isn't made properly, animal shelters and homeless strays bear the consequences of impulse buys or the wrong pet for a particular family.

Remember that the dog that's perfect for your friend's family and lifestyle can be a disaster for you.

One of the first things to consider is "Is it even realistic for me to have a dog? - both in terms of dollars and lime.

Routine medical expenses, food, equipment (such as a crate, collars, leashes etc.), training costs and yearly license fees can have a significant impact on a budget. You also need to consider your housing situation if you are a renter, or even considering a move into a condominium in the 15 years you may have your canine companion, there may be current or future restrictions on whether you can have a pet, or how large a pet you can have.

Also be sure the family has no health concerns or allergies to dogs. When thinking about your health, think about 10 or 15 years in the future - a 70 year old may not want to get a puppy, but might instead adopt an older dog.

Once you've made the decision that you can make the long term commitment that your dog will require, start to do some research on breeds.

You can learn a lot through sources like the American Kennel Club, the Internet, other dog owners, books and breeders. But keep in mind the old saying that "Love is blind" when using these sources, since they will have a bias towards their breed.

Two of the best resources and ones that people rarely think consulting are a local, reputable dog trainer and veterinarian. Either of these will be impartial to a specific breed, and will have experience and knowledge about the various breeds without having a vested interest in a specific breed. And once you have your dog, you'll already have an ongoing relationship with your trainer and veterinarian, so their goal would be to help you find the ideal match of canine to individual.

Every dog on this earth has been born with a genetic blueprint which gives them a predisposition for certain behaviors and energy levels.

Although personalities will vary within the breeds, you'll see specific characteristics within the breed. A good example is that dogs that are considered "working breeds" will want a "job."

Shepherds will want to herd, retrievers will want to retrieve, and so if your lifestyle is 12-hour work days, followed by takeout food and a video, these more active breeds will not be a good match.

Some breeds tend to be calmer and react better to children, hence the popularity of golden retrievers for families with young children.

If you travel a lot, and would want to take your dog with you, a smaller dog that can accompany you in the passenger compartment of an airplane might be a better choice than a large dog that needs to be crated in the cargo hold. Longhaired dogs shed more than shorthaired, so think about whether you have time to groom your dog and vacuum your house more frequently.

Certain breeds also have tendencies towards given health problems, such as dysplasia in German Shepherds and other larger breeds or deafness in Dalmatians.

And don't forget to consider a mixed breed which will have a variety of traits from what was just mentioned. As a general rule, mixed breeds usually don't have a lot of health issues associated with purebred dogs. And don't forget to visit your local animal shelter, where puppies and older dogs, mixed breeds and pure breeds are available for adoption, often because their prior owners didn't think through what we've just discussed.

MAKE THE SELECTION PROCESS ENJOYABLE AS THE MANY YEARS OF LOVE AND PLEASURE THAT WILL BE RETURNED TENFOLD.

I hope this helps.

Gus

BACK