

Before You Adopt - Thoughts Concerning Adoption

Be realistic about your new canine companion and expect him to act like a dog. In a natural setting it is normal for dogs to jump on one another, mouth, chase, bark, chew, dig holes, etc...so many of the habits that we find irritating. Take the time to train your dog as to what is acceptable behavior, and what is not. Please be patient and remember dogs are pack animals and aren't meant to be by themselves for long periods of time. Your family is his new pack and he wants to be included. Bring him inside and teach him to be well-mannered.

Before you adopt please consider the following questions:

- **If you rent is it O.K. with the landlord to have a dog?**
- **Can you financially afford all the things it will take to keep your canine happy, healthy, and safe?**
- **Have you researched the breed or kind of dog you want to live with?** Dogs are genetically programmed to follow their instincts. What size is too big? Long haired dogs require more maintenance and upkeep. Some breeds of dog require considerably more mental stimulation and exercise. Every dog is different, try to choose wisely and do your best to get a canine that is behaviorally sound, with a good temperament and disposition. It's difficult enough to find the time to work with an agreeable dog, much less a canine that already has issues - regardless of age. The Humane Society of the United States asks all breeders and shelters to only make available to the public "safe" canines. An excellent article in Whole Dog Journal (July 2001) on "How To Pick A Winner" is worth checking out (http://www.whole-dog-journal.com/pub/4_7/features/5372-1.html).
- **Do you have a way to safely secure your dog on the property when away?** If the fencing is inadequate it doesn't take a canine very long to find a way out. Some dogs if left in a fenced yard all day are bored and develop habits such as digging, fence running, and excessive barking. Dogs that are tied out or chained are at the mercy of other dogs that may roam the neighborhood, or might be teased and taunted. Some dogs kept on a chain for many hours become very territorial and aggressive. Try your best to confine your dog inside when away from home. Crate training your dog can be of great benefit.
- **Do you have children?** Experts suggest you wait until the youngest is 6 years of age before bringing home a puppy or dog. Most parents don't have the time to closely supervise their young children with a new canine. Very young children are perceived to be playmates with puppies who will jump on them and bite as they would with their litter-mates. Some children don't know how to be gentle with puppies. (It's not uncommon for us to receive calls from young mothers who want the puppy out of the house after realizing how much work they are.) Older dogs can be annoyed or frightened by the activity or behavior of small children. Some dogs feel threatened when hugged or squeezed around the neck or stared at by children. Threatening gestures can trigger guarding instincts around highly valued items such as food bowls, bones, toys, etc. Dog professionals suggest if you must have a dog with young children choose one more than 2 years old that is **known to be safe** with them. Most dogs just tolerate children, but there are those canines that truly love their attention.
- **If you're purchasing the dog as a companion for another canine it is best to have the first dog fully trained before bringing the second one home.** Many times two dogs will bond with each other and ignore the owner making it difficult to train either of them. This is a common complaint from people who have litter-mates.
- **Be aware that having two or more dogs is a "pack" which can be difficult to control.** Primal buttons are being pushed and you may find your once sedate house pet joining in new activities

such as chasing the family cat or becoming more territorial in the backyard because he now has more support.

- **A tired dog is a good dog**, as they say. Do you have the time to sufficiently exercise your companion? Don't be mistaken, a dog left in a backyard while you're at work normally doesn't exercise herself. She will need your interaction, or the supervised interaction of another dog to satisfy her needs.
- **If your new dog isn't housetrained, is extremely timid, suffers from "separation anxiety", or perhaps is exhibiting signs of aggression are you knowledgeable and prepared to retrain her?** If not, are you able to afford professional help?
- **Do you realize you are legally responsible for any damage your dog may cause?** For example in Hood River County if your wandering dog causes a car accident you will be held accountable.
- **If the dog you've chosen isn't working out, make sure beforehand that the previous owner or the shelter/rescue group will take him back.**

Be Aware

It is so disheartening for our volunteers to take calls from people who are looking to "get rid of their pets". To avoid making some of the same mistakes we encourage serious thought when considering the responsibilities of adding a new puppy, kitten, dog, or cat to the household. The following is a list of common reasons we hear from people who relinquish their canines to shelters or rescue groups:

- behavior problems (no one took the time to train the dog to be a well-mannered pet, or the family got an older dog with "issues" and they're not equipped to re-train him)
- the arrival of a new baby
- the family has to move
- the dog has killed the neighbor's livestock
- someone in the family developed allergies
- people don't "have time" for their animal(s)
- the dog has bitten someone or harmed another pet companion
- purchasing the wrong breed of dog for the family
- people housing more animals than they can care for
- animals being dumped on them by their adult children
- those who don't want the expense of boarding their dog while on vacation
- the kids are no longer home and the parents feel sorry for their pet because it isn't getting any attention
- the dog got bigger than expected
- two dogs are too much to handle
- the landlord wants the dog **gone**
- the dog is pregnant
- not happy with purebred and the breeder won't take the dog back
- the dog won't stay at home
- an elderly parent died and there's no place for the dog
- the puppy is "too much" for the children