



How To Get A New Dog

Buying a new puppy is a big decision. The pet you choose will be your constant companion for 12 years or more. There are many different kinds of dogs, and many places from which they can be obtained. Choosing a dog is a bit like choosing a family member, so you want to make the right decision – but how? Here are some simple pointers to help you decide.

Purebred or mixed-breed? This is a subject all to itself, and I want to dedicate a future article exclusively to this topic. However, keep in mind that purebred dogs will generally cost more, but you will have a good idea of what the dog will look like and act like when it grows up. Mixed breed dogs are more readily available, but it can be difficult to predict the size and personalities these dogs will have when they become adults.

What about pet stores? Pet stores often obtain dogs from large breeders (so-called “puppy mills”). Pet stores also cannot provide an appropriate environment for socialization during the critical development period of 10-16 weeks. For these reasons alone, pet stores are generally not the best place to get a puppy. What about private breeders? Private breeders can be a mixed bag – some are doing a great job, but some are not. It’s easy to tell the difference. Good breeders demonstrate obvious care for the pet after you take it home. Good breeders will ensure the parents are properly cared for, keep their kennels clean, and give their puppies a good start in life by deworming puppies and ensuring they have their first vaccines before they go to new homes. Good breeders are doing their best to provide healthy and happy puppies that will make good pets.

What about the SPCA? Dogs wind up at shelters for a variety of reasons, many of which have nothing to do with the dog. Unfortunately, some shelter animals were relinquished because they developed behavior problems, and others develop problems at the shelter. We all feel sorry for dogs in the shelter, and down inside most of us want to save them all. The reality of the situation, though is that there are plenty of good dogs in the shelter to choose from. If you decide to get a shelter dog, take the time and effort to be sure your choice doesn't have undesirable behaviors. Spend some time with the dogs, and consider several before making your final choice.

Finding a good puppy takes time and effort, but this effort pays off handsomely in years of companionship from a good pet. Remember, pets are also the only members of your family you get to choose – so take your time and choose wisely.