



## ►Deciding to own a Dog

Never buy on impulse and really think through the decision to get a dog. A dog is a lifetime commitment and will rely on its guardian for all of its needs.

The average life span of a dog is anywhere from ten to fifteen years or more and a puppy is a living creature you cannot "try on for size". Be prepared to make a commitment to the care and well being of your dog from puppyhood to old age. To help make the decision on whether you should introduce a dog to your life, consider the following points:

### **Does your lifestyle offer sufficient time to socialize and train your puppy?**

This will be a substantial commitment on your part, particularly in the first year. Puppies do not come with an obedience guarantee, nor will they be housebroken. Puppies are like children and need the constant love and attention of their family. Your early commitment will be duly rewarded with the unqualified love and admiration of your dog through its entire life.

### **Will your dog be happy in your home?**

Consider your own accommodation. Apartment or house, large or small, is your yard fenced? Do you live in the country or an urban area? Where will you exercise your dog? All puppies grow up and the type of accommodation you have must be appropriate for your mature dog. Each breed has different needs and characteristics. If your selected breed requires space to use up excess energy, don't fool yourself and don't expect the animal to be happy in a confined space. As much as you may like the look of a specific breed, be sure its physical environment is a comfortable setting for the animal.

### **Are all members of the family in favour of having a puppy join the household?**

A "split family" may lead to disagreements and ultimately result in the dog being returned or left with a rescue group or humane society. In order for the dog to become a lifelong member of the family, the original decision to buy must be shared with equal enthusiasm by all members of the family.

### **Are there young children in the family?**

One of the main reasons people purchase a puppy is "for the kids". Be sure the match between dog and children is right. Sometimes young children can seriously hurt a puppy albeit unintentional and by the same token a powerful or rambunctious puppy can easily overcome, hurt and frighten a small child. While it is ideal for both to socialize at a young age, parents must assume the responsibility of constant watchfulness so neither is harmed. This done, both puppy and child will very likely become bosom buddies to the end.

### **Who will feed, walk, groom and pick up after the dog?**

Too often a puppy arrives without the decision makers thinking this through. If this is to be a family dog, everyone should be committed to its care. If children are involved, don't expect them to shoulder the responsibility, it's too much, but they should be expected to assume their portion of this responsibility. It often ends up with one family member attending to the dog's needs, so talk it over and come to some agreements in advance. Everyone will be happy - including the dog.

### **Have you prepared a budget for the cost of caring for the dog?**

This will involve nutritious food, municipal licensing, regular visits to your vet, plus bedding etc. Such things as obedience training, regular grooming or pet insurance should also be considered. It won't be a huge amount but be prepared for the additional expense in your household budget.

### **Don't buy the dog as a surprise gift.**

A purebred puppy can be a marvelous gift if the giver has thoroughly discussed the matter with the recipient in advance. All of the previous consideration must be reviewed with the recipient and they most certainly need to be the major influence in the breed of dog being obtained. Under no circumstances is the practice of giving a surprise puppy appropriate. Too often the animal is unwanted from the beginning and finds itself helplessly abandoned or if kept, ultimately neglected. Please be responsible, your dog will love you for it.