



A Dog for You and Your Family

*D*ogs are wonderful companions. You can share secrets with your dog, and she will never tell a soul. You can be happy, sad, tired, or even cranky with your dog, and she will still love you just as much. Dogs don't care what we look like, how much money we make, or what kind of car we drive. They love us just the way we are. A dog can be the best friend you've ever had, but that only happens when you choose the right dog for you—the right breed (or mixture of breeds), as well as the right sex, age, and temperament. Owning a dog requires a commitment to support and care for the dog throughout her lifetime, usually fourteen to sixteen years.

Caring for a dog requires your time and, certainly, some of your money. In addition, adding a dog to your family may require you to make some changes to your lifestyle. So, before you go get a dog, let's take a look at both dog ownership and dogs in general so you can make the best choice possible, both for you and your future dog.

The Realities of Dog Ownership

Before you go looking for a dog, make sure you understand the realities of dog ownership. It can require a major change to your family, your schedule, your household routine, and, perhaps most importantly, your budget. On the positive side of dog ownership, a dog will make you laugh and will provide companionship. A dog will help you get more exercise and will increase your social opportunities. After all, it's impossible to go for a walk with a dog without at least one person commenting

on what a wonderful dog you have! However, a dog is also a responsibility that you will need to take seriously because this dog is dependent on you for everything.

WHO WILL BE LIVING WITH THE DOG?

Do you live alone? If so, then the decision whether to add a dog to your household is entirely up to you. No one can argue with you about your choice, but at the same time, you will be solely responsible for caring for the dog. Can you do it by yourself? It's a big commitment.

If you live with other people—roommates or your family—you all need to talk about getting a dog. Everyone needs to be happy with the idea of adding a dog to the household. If someone is unhappy about this decision, he could take out that displeasure on the dog. Even if he isn't blatantly mean to the dog, the dog will know that this person dislikes her, which could result in behavior problems from the dog.

If you have children, you will need to choose the right breed of dog (and the correct individual dog), as not all dogs are patient and tolerant enough for kids. You also will have to be able to spend time with both the kids and the dog so that the dog learns proper, respectful behavior around children. Without guidance, the dog (especially a young puppy) will think of the kids as fellow playmates (littermates) and will jump on them, bite, nip, and steal their food and toys, and could easily become a tyrant rather than a good friend.

If the dog will be living with senior citizens, it is important to choose a breed and an individual dog that is calmer, less apt to paw and scratch fragile skin, and less likely to jump up and potentially knock someone down. Young puppies can be a lot of work, so for many seniors, adopting an older puppy or an adult dog is often the better choice.

If you have other pets, be aware that not all dogs are friendly with other dogs, and some are not trustworthy with other animals, including horses, cats, rabbits, and ferrets. You'll need to take this into consideration when you choose your new dog.



Photo by Sheri Wachtstetter

Adding a dog to your family is a big commitment. Make sure you think through your decision and have agreement from everyone in the family. Bella, a Labrador Retriever, pictured with owners Kyle and Amy Gallagher.

DO YOU HAVE TIME FOR A DOG?

If you have never owned a dog, at least as an adult, you may not understand how much time a dog requires. Dogs are companion animals; that means they are happiest while spending time with their

people. When isolated for hours at a time, day after day, many dogs develop bad behaviors (barking, digging, destructive chewing) out of loneliness and boredom. If you live alone and work long hours every day, don't get a dog, unless you have a neighbor who will help you. If he or she will take your dog out a couple of times each day for a potty break, a walk, and a play session, then dog ownership might work. If a neighbor is not available, you might want to check into hiring a professional dog walker or taking the dog to doggy daycare. But look into these services before you get a dog, as they can be expensive. Otherwise, you might be better off with a pet who doesn't require your companionship.

Puppies and newly adopted adult dogs need time to bond with their new owners. Bonding is the deep commitment felt between a dog and her owner. It's a sense of responsibility toward each other, and it doesn't happen automatically; a bond takes time to form. During the first few weeks and even months that your dog lives with you, it's important to spend several hours each day with her so that this bond can develop.

Your new dog also will need some training, and that, too, takes time. Your new dog will need to learn all about housetraining and household rules, as well as proper social behavior. You also will need to schedule time to exercise and play with your dog and to groom her. As your dog grows up, you may want to participate in dog activities and sports. Those, too, take time.

WILL YOU ENJOY LIFE WITH A DOG?

Adding a dog to your life will change your life. For some people, it changes drastically. You will need to dog-proof your home because a dog's tail can clear a coffee table of knickknacks in one wag. Puppies and young dogs like to chew and do not discriminate between leather chew toys and leather shoes. You will have to learn to put things away, close closet doors, and put up baby gates to head off trouble. Teaching a dog what is allowed to be touched and what isn't takes time, and during that time you'll need to prevent problems.

You'll have to dog-proof the backyard, too, by putting away tools and making sure that the kids keep their toys cleaned up, because those could easily become attractive chew toys. Also, keep in mind that dogs dig, so if you have a favorite garden, you'll want to put a fence around it.

A dog, and especially a puppy, may try your patience time and again. You can't lose your temper; that is never effective, and it won't help your dog learn. Instead, you'll have to learn to control your emotions when problems happen and learn how to train your dog effectively.

Life with a dog isn't all problems, though. Dogs are great social icebreakers. It's almost impossible to go for a walk without stopping to talk about your dog with at least one person. If you have a puppy, you'll be stopped even more because puppies are cute. Floppy ears, big eyes, and a wagging tail are irresistible.

It has been medically proven time and again that laughter is good for us. It helps us mentally and physically, releasing endorphins that make us feel better and lift our spirits. Dogs are great for making us laugh. Clumsy puppies are always doing something funny, from tripping over their own paws to discovering the fun of new toys. Dogs can make us laugh and often will do so on purpose.

Researchers have found that owning a dog is good for us. Petting a dog elevates our mental outlook (brightens our mood) and lowers our blood pressure. Several studies have shown that heart-attack victims who owned dogs had a much longer survival rate than those who didn't own dogs.

Dog owners may be more active, going for walks with their dogs; or perhaps these positive results are simply due to dog owners laughing more often. Dog owners may have more social interaction with other people, which is healthier than social isolation. Personally, I think dogs help us feel needed, wanted, and loved, and that's enough motivation for most people to fight illness or injury.

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

You can share your life with a dog just about anywhere; dogs are very adaptable. They can live in mansions or bungalows, in condos or high-rises. Dogs love big yards with room to run but can learn to live with several daily walks and no yard. If you want to share your life with a dog, you can make it work. Some situations just require a little more commitment from you to make them work well.

When you add a dog to your life, your living space becomes your dog's living space, too. It doesn't matter whether you live in a 4,000-square-foot house or a 550-square-foot apartment; your dog will be with you, underfoot, simply because that's where she wants to be. Although most giant-breed dogs are not as active as smaller breeds, they still take up space. If you have a large house, a Great Dane sprawled across the living room floor is not going to seem nearly as large as one sharing a tiny apartment.

Your dog is going to track dirt and dead leaves into your home, and she will probably bring in muddy toys and half-chewed sticks. If you're lucky, she may even bring in the gopher she caught in the backyard. Most dogs shed, especially in the spring and fall, and will be more than willing to share their lovely coats with you, all over the house. Your dog may leave puddles of drool on the floor and may splash her drinking water from wall to wall.

A yard can definitely make keeping a dog easier. Without a yard, you will need to walk your dog several times each day so that she can relieve herself, including first thing in the morning and last thing at night. Bad weather is no excuse; dogs need to go outside, rain, snow, sleet, or shine! A yard also makes playing with your dog easier, especially if you don't want her roughhousing. Daily play sessions are great for bonding with your dog and can be great exercise. If you don't have a yard, you will need to walk your dog, jog with her, or find a safe place where she can run and play.

No matter where you live, you probably have neighbors. They may live very close or farther away, but they are there. What will your neighbors think about your new dog? Although you may think that your dog is none of their business, she certainly will be if she is annoying or poorly trained. To be a good neighbor, let neighbors know that you're bringing home a new dog and ask them to let you know if your dog is being annoying before a problem develops and before they get angry.

CAN YOU AFFORD A DOG?

It's not polite to discuss finances—especially a personal budget—but this is something you need to talk about before you add a dog to your family. Dogs can be expensive. For the first year of your dog's life, it may seem like money is disappearing from your wallet faster than you can replace it.

Can You Legally Keep a Dog?

You may think that owning a dog is one of your inalienable rights—one of those rights no one can take away. But that's not necessarily so. If you own your home, do you belong to a homeowners' association? What are its regulations concerning dogs? Many associations limit how many dogs may live in each home or have rules concerning the size of dogs allowed.

If you rent, does your rental contract allow dog ownership? In most states, landlords can legally forbid dog ownership. If they do allow pets, they can limit how many pets may be in the home, the sizes, and even which types (such as forbidding dogs or reptiles). Some cities, counties, states, and even countries have outlawed certain breeds of dogs, and some insurance companies will not insure you if you own particular breeds.

Before you get a dog, do some research and find out if you can legally keep one.

The most common expenses incurred in a puppy's first year include:

- ◆ Cost of puppy from a breeder: \$500–\$2,000
- ◆ Cost of dog from a shelter: \$50–\$200
- ◆ Initial supplies: \$100–\$200
- ◆ First vet exam, including vaccinations and worming: \$100
- ◆ Second and third vaccinations and exam during each visit: \$100–\$150
- ◆ Spaying and neutering, depending on the dog's size: \$125–\$200
- ◆ Microchipping, heartworm preventative, and miscellaneous vet costs: \$100–\$200
- ◆ Local licensing: \$20–\$30
- ◆ A year's worth of high-quality food and treats: \$500–\$1,000
- ◆ Grooming supplies, including flea and tick prevention: \$100
- ◆ Kindergarten training class: \$75–\$100
- ◆ Cleaning supplies: \$20–\$40

This list covers only the basics. If you need to build a new fence, shore up an existing one, or build a dog run, your expenses will increase. This doesn't include an emergency room visit, either, should your puppy hurt herself or eat something she shouldn't have eaten. So, before you get a new dog, make sure your budget can handle it.

WHAT DOES YOUR FUTURE HOLD?

None of us has mastered the ability to see into the future, but most of us have plans or goals of what we would like to accomplish. What are yours? Will a dog fit into those plans ten, twelve, and even fourteen years into the future?



Photo by Sheri Wachtstetter

Dogs come in all sizes, from very tiny to very large, from lap dogs to guard dogs, and everything in between. Margaret, an English Mastiff, owned by Arnie Peller; and Gordan, a Pug, owned by Sheri Wachtstetter.

People who do purebred dog rescue and those who work in shelters hear the same stories day after day: “My kids wanted the dog but have now left for college, and we don’t have the time (or the desire) to care for the dog anymore.” Or, “I got the dog while I was going to school, and now I have a job and can’t care for her anymore.”

Before you add a dog to your family, try to take a look forward in time. What do you plan to be doing in ten years? Where? Will a dog fit into those plans?

Dogs Come in All Sizes, Shapes, and Temperaments

No other single species on the planet has more variety in size and shape than the species of domesticated dogs, *Canis familiaris*. You’ll find everything from tiny 2-pound lap dogs to 200-pound live-stock protection dogs, from dogs with extremely short muzzles to those with elegant long noses, and from those with squat, sturdy bodies and short legs made for power to those with long legs and bodies made for running. There are dogs with no hair and dogs with lots of coat. Some dogs are friendly and social, while others are wary, cautious, and protective. The variables are tremendous.

Choosing the right dog for you and your family should be a carefully thought out decision, not an impulse buy based on little or no research. That puppy in the pet store window may be cute,

The AKC's Ten Most Popular Dogs

The Labrador Retriever remained the most popular dog for the sixteenth consecutive year in 2005, according to American Kennel Club registration statistics. The entire top ten includes:

1. Labrador Retriever
2. Golden Retriever
3. Yorkshire Terrier
4. German Shepherd Dog
5. Beagle
6. Dachshund
7. Boxer
8. Poodle
9. Shih Tzu
10. Miniature Schnauzer

but do you know anything about her? The Neapolitan Mastiff in the *Harry Potter* movies has a unique look, but would that breed really fit into your lifestyle? Unfortunately, many people do far more research when they buy a new refrigerator than they do when adding a dog to the family!

Part II of this book profiles more than 325 breeds, breed varieties, and mixes. I give a brief history of each breed and the breed's occupation. I also provide information about the breed's personality and temperament, including certain traits, such as playfulness, trainability, protectiveness, and affection toward the owner. The breed's activity level is also discussed, as well as its ability to get along with other dogs, cats, livestock, and children. I queried the experts, especially longtime breeders and owners, as well as trainers, to gain this information. Before you decide on a breed, make sure that the breed's characteristics match what you're looking for and will meld smoothly into your family's lifestyle.

WHAT IS A BREED? OR A MIXED BREED?

Dogs have aided mankind throughout their shared history, but as dogs became more valuable as workers, and more jobs were found for our canine partners, people began breeding their dogs with the goal of producing better workers. Perhaps one farmer had a female dog who was gentle with sheep yet tough enough to handle cattle. He wanted to perpetuate her abilities, so he found a neighboring farmer who had a male with the same abilities. They bred their dogs in the hopes of passing on those valuable traits.

The same happened within most of the occupations dogs filled: big game hunters, vermin hunters, livestock guardians, and more. The dog's ability was much more important than any other traits at the time. But at various times during our shared history—from early Egyptian, Greek, and Roman civilizations through today—the dog's appearance was also important. People bred to accentuate certain characteristics, such as size, body type or shape, head and muzzle shape, coat color, type, and length, and more. In this way, breeds were developed.

The definition of a dog breed varies, depending on the expert being questioned. However, a breed has several unique characteristics:

- ♦ The dogs in any given breed must share common ancestors. The gene pool might be smaller (with fewer individual dogs) or larger, but it must be shared.

Breeds That Need Regular Grooming and Trims

Coats that need daily care, as well as professional grooming, take dedication. If these coats are not cared for correctly, mats and tangles can result, causing discomfort to the dog, added expenses when the dog visits the groomer, and even skin problems if the mats are ignored.

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|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ♦ Airedale | ♦ Lhasa Apso | ♦ Silky Terrier |
| ♦ Bichon Frise | ♦ Maltese | ♦ Welsh Springer Spaniel |
| ♦ Bouvier des Flandres | ♦ Old English Sheepdog | ♦ Welsh Terrier |
| ♦ Cocker Spaniel | ♦ Poodle | ♦ West Highland White Terrier |
| ♦ English Cocker Spaniel | ♦ Schnauzer | ♦ Wire Fox Terrier |
| ♦ English Springer Spaniel | ♦ Scottish Terrier | ♦ Yorkshire Terrier |
| ♦ Kerry Blue Terrier | ♦ Shih Tzu | |

- ♦ The dogs must have similar physical characteristics that make the breed unique from other dog breeds.
- ♦ The dogs must share temperament characteristics and, when appropriate, working abilities.
- ♦ The dogs must breed true (producing offspring like themselves) and must have bred true for a minimum of six or seven generations.

Modern breeds have a breed standard. This is a written description of the breed that details what dogs within the breed should look like and contains information on size, height, weight, shape of the body, length of the legs, shape of the head, and details of the coat. The breed standard is implemented by the national or international breed club that supervises the breed. At conformation shows, judges must be familiar with the breed standard and should judge those dogs accordingly. Wise breeders use the standard as a guideline to choose those dogs who compare most favorably with it.

Dog owners today, who are often unconcerned with the dog's original occupation, often get purebred dogs because a purebred dog is more of a known entity than a mixed-breed dog. A mixed breed, simply because it is a mix of two or more breeds, is very much an unknown. You cannot know exactly how big the dog will be, how much and what type of coat the dog will have as an adult, and which temperament traits the dog will have. With a purebred, you know what the dog was bred to do (such as hunt or herd), and certain behaviors can be predicted because of this. With a purebred, you even have a good idea as to the breed's lifespan.

But mixed breeds have their fans, too. Many people feel that mixed breeds have fewer health problems than purebreds—that they have hybrid vigor. Others enjoy the surprise of the unknown and love the randomness and creativity that mixed breeds sometimes display. Many dog owners love the uniqueness of a mixed breed. While many purebreds look very much alike, most mixed breeds are one of a kind.

BIG OR SMALL? LONG BODIED OR SHORT?

Most of the size variation of dogs is due to the breed's original occupation. Dogs required to protect flocks of sheep had to be formidable enough to scare off predators, have the protective temperament and drive to battle predators, and be tough enough to survive the fight. Herding dogs needed to be agile enough to work the stock and small enough to have the stamina to work all day. Property guardian dogs had to be large enough to be intimidating to trespassers and formidable enough to ensure the trespassers left the property. Dogs bred to hunt vermin had to be small enough to fit into tight places or burrows after the vermin, yet tough enough to make the kill.

Body shape was also originally related to the dog's job. The Dachshund's long, low body shape allowed the dog to go down burrows after her prey. The Greyhound's sleek body shape made the breed able to run fast, while the deep chest provided room for a large heart and lungs—all so the dog could run more efficiently.

For you, as a dog owner, size and body shape are usually a personal preference. Many people love the look of the giant breeds and the reaction these dogs instill in other people. Other people like much smaller dogs, especially the toys, because they can snuggle on the lap, fit into smaller places (such as a carrier under the seat of an airplane), or simply because they are so cute.

LONG HAIR OR SHORT? SLICK OR FUZZY?

Coat types originally developed as a means of protecting the dog. Terriers, with their tough, wiry coats, were better able to fit through tight places and withstand battles with rats and other vermin.

Herding dogs with medium-length coats would be protected from briars and brambles, as well as bad weather, yet would not be burdened by too heavy a coat. Sled dogs with a thick double coat could withstand the coldest of temperatures and continue to work hard, pulling sleds in the snow.

Although a coat that enables the dog to work is still important, personal preferences and style trends also play a big part in the coat a breed may have. For example, Border Collies competing in conformation dog shows have a much more elegant coat than the Border Collies usually seen herding sheep.

Short slick coats do not mat or tangle and so are easy to care for in that respect. Nevertheless, these coats still need regular combing and brushing to keep the hair and skin healthy. Short coats shed, usually in the spring and fall, and the short hairs can be bristly. Breeds with

Photo by Sheri Wachtstetter



Many people mistakenly believe short-haired dogs don't shed, but they do, and those little hairs can be bristly. Winslow, a Staffordshire Bull Terrier, owned by Steph La Flamme.

short coats include Boxers, Doberman Pinschers, Labrador Retrievers, Rat Terriers, Smooth Fox Terriers, and Weimaraners.

Medium-length coats are not short and slick, but are not long and dragging on the floor either. Australian Shepherds, German Shepherds, Papillons, Japanese Chins, and Silky Terriers have a medium-length coat. These coats, if not combed and brushed regularly, can tangle, especially behind the ears, under the collar, and on the back legs. When these coats shed, the soft hairs usually form hairballs, like dust bunnies, that will float throughout the house.

Long coats require more care than other coat types because the tangles form so easily. These coats are gorgeous, though, and well worth the care. Irish, English, and Gordon setters have wonderful long, flowing coats, as do Afghan Hounds, Cocker Spaniels, Maltese, and Yorkshire Terriers.

Many breeds have coat types that don't fit into these categories; some have coats that are unique. There is nothing quite like the amazing coat of an Old English Sheepdog that has been freshly brushed. A Bichon Frise has a unique coat that needs regular trimming. Some terriers have a tougher, coarser coat, while others, such as the Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, have a very soft coat. Poodles can have a soft, almost fluffy coat or a curly coat. In all types, the hair grows all the time and needs regular grooming. Puli, Kuvasz, and Komondors have hair that *cords*, or mats, in long, vertical cords all over the dog's body. And then there are the hairless breeds, some of which have a few scattered hairs, while others have tufts on the head and feet. The variety of coat types is really amazing, with something to suit everyone's taste.



Photo by Melinda Peters, owner

The Puli's coat is made up of long, vertical cords or tangles. Once the cords are formed, the coat is relatively easy to care for. Ch. Immerzu Galuska CDX, OA, OAP, OAJ, OAJ, OJP, and TDIA.

PERSONALITIES AND ACTIVITY LEVELS

One of the keys to a successful relationship with a dog is to try to match your personality and activity level with that of a dog breed. If you are a calm, quiet person, nothing is more annoying than a dog bouncing up and down, barking, and begging you to do something all the time. Although some differences in personality and activity levels can be good—a dog slightly more active and extroverted than you may get you outside more—too many differences are frustrating and aggravating.

Excited and Extroverted

These breeds are normally easily excited; they react to doorbells with vigor. They are also extroverts in the full sense of the word. As far as these breeds are concerned, the world is theirs!

- ◆ Chihuahua
- ◆ Dachshund
- ◆ Fox Terrier
- ◆ Parson Russell and Jack Russell Terriers
- ◆ Pomeranian
- ◆ Scottish Terrier
- ◆ Shih Tzu
- ◆ Silky Terrier
- ◆ West Highland White Terrier
- ◆ Yorkshire Terrier

Here, There, and Everywhere!

These are active, curious breeds who want to explore the world. They will relax but don't really want to make relaxing a habit.

- ◆ Cocker Spaniel
- ◆ Smooth and Wire Fox Terriers
- ◆ Miniature Pinscher
- ◆ Miniature Schnauzer
- ◆ Shetland Sheepdog
- ◆ Shih Tzu
- ◆ Silky Terrier

Photo by Sheri Wachtstetter



Every dog needs a job to do, although it's more important for some breeds than others. Riker, an Australian Shepherd (with a haircut), owned by Liz Palika, bred by Kathy Usher.

Give a Dog a Job

These dogs have a strong hunting, herding, or working heritage and are happiest with a job to do. That might be as simple as obedience training or structured play, or may even be as easy as bringing in the newspaper each morning. These dogs need to feel needed.

- ◆ Australian Shepherd
- ◆ Border Collie
- ◆ Doberman Pinscher
- ◆ English Springer Spaniel

- ◆ German Shepherd Dog
- ◆ Golden Retriever
- ◆ Poodle (all sizes)
- ◆ Puli
- ◆ Rottweiler
- ◆ Shetland Sheepdog

Calmer, More Laid-Back Breeds

Although these breeds are happy to play and more than willing to get into trouble should it head their way, these breeds can also tend toward the couch potato lifestyle.

- ◆ Akita
- ◆ Alaskan Malamute
- ◆ Basset Hound
- ◆ Bloodhound
- ◆ Bulldog
- ◆ Chow Chow
- ◆ Great Dane
- ◆ Greyhound
- ◆ Newfoundland
- ◆ Pug
- ◆ Rottweiler
- ◆ Saint Bernard

Affectionate Shadows

Although most dogs prefer to be close to their owners, some breeds are more demanding about it than others. These dogs, if isolated too much, will usually develop behavior problems.

- ◆ Australian Shepherd
- ◆ Bichon Frise
- ◆ Border Collie
- ◆ Cocker Spaniel
- ◆ Doberman Pinscher
- ◆ German Shepherd Dog
- ◆ Golden Retriever
- ◆ Maltese
- ◆ Poodle (all sizes)
- ◆ Shetland Sheepdog

MORE TO THINK ABOUT

After all you've been asked to think about—size, long hair or short, purebred or mixed, temperament, and more—there are actually a couple more things you should mull over before you go looking for a dog.

Puppy or Dog?

Do you want a puppy or would the best dog for you be an adult? Puppies are cute, there's no doubt about that, and everyone loves a puppy. But puppies are babies and need a lot of care, require very careful supervision, and need to spend a lot of time with you. On the other hand, puppies are like lumps of clay, ready for you to shape and mold. When you raise a puppy, it's your responsibility, yes, but you can also raise the puppy the way you wish her to grow up.

If you don't have the time or the patience for a puppy, or if you have very young children or senior citizens in the house who might be too fragile for a puppy, you may want an older puppy or an adult dog. This dog is past the worst of puppyhood (the housetraining, mouthing and biting, and, I hope, the chewing) and, depending on the dog's age, is usually a little calmer. The downfall of adopting an older puppy or an adult is that doing so is much like buying a used car. You have no idea how she has been treated, whether the dog has had any training, or how she has been socialized to people and other dogs. Like a used car, she may be a gem or a lemon.

Male or Female?

You also need to decide whether you want a male or female dog. Depending on the individual breed and its characteristics, males are often a little more protective of their property than females and, as puppies, tend to be more destructive. Females are usually a little easier to housetrain, although males often take to obedience training better. Although some breeds may have a little bit of difference, as a general rule there is no difference in levels of excitability, behavior problems, or affection between males and females.

Finding a Puppy (or Dog)

The ideal place to find a purebred puppy or dog is with a reputable breeder. A reputable breeder knows his breed well, knows the breed standard, and can explain the breed to you in layman's terms. He may even use one of his dogs as an example. He will breed only the best of his dogs and will have any needed health tests done prior to breeding. You will be able to see the puppies' parents and maybe even the grandparents. A reputable breeder will also screen potential puppy buyers and will sell only to those who will provide the best for his puppies; he will turn away people obviously not suited to his breed. A reputable breeder will be available to the new owners and will answer questions when problems arise. If a puppy of his loses her home for any reason, the breeder

will take that dog back into his home. You can find a reputable breeder through personal referrals or by asking questions at a local dog show.

Many people breed dogs, but not all fit the definition of reputable breeder; some simply wish to breed a litter from their male or female. Perhaps this breeder bought a dog for what she considers a great deal of money and wishes to recoup that expense by having a litter of puppies. Some may have simply neglected to spay or neuter their dogs and an accidental litter resulted. Others purposefully bred their dogs but have not done what is necessary (health tests or breeder education) to produce the best puppies possible. These breeders, often called *backyard breeders*, do sometimes turn out very nice dogs. More often, though, their dogs are of a lesser quality. The dogs may not measure up to the breed standard or may have health problems, including inherited health defects. Someone who wishes to become involved in breeding should contact a reputable breeder or the national breed club and ask if anyone is interested in mentoring him, guiding him through this confusing and difficult science.

A *puppy mill* is a breeder who produces puppies strictly for profit—often many, many puppies—and is not at all concerned with the breed standard. A puppy mill is usually a farm, and the dogs are housed in cages, often in layers of two or three, with feces and urine raining down on the dogs below. A puppy mill can be a family home, too, though, with simply far too many dogs being bred. The dogs used for breeding at a puppy mill are rarely, if ever, tested for health defects, and to maximize profits, the female dogs are usually bred the very first time they come into season.

You can also adopt a puppy or dog from a shelter. Many wonderful dogs, purebreds and mixed breeds, can be found in local shelters. Though some may have been given up by their owners because of behavioral or training difficulties, many more are at the shelter due to no fault of their own. Perhaps the puppy's owner didn't realize how much work puppies were and gave the puppy up. Or, maybe an elderly owner passed away and the family didn't want the dog. The downfall to a shelter dog is that the dog is an unknown. There will be no information about the dog's parents or genetics, or how the dog was treated previously. The good side to shelter adoption is that by adopting one of these dogs, you're saving a dog's life.

The most common reasons dogs are given up to shelters include:

- ◆ Landlord or homeowners' association issues
- ◆ Moving
- ◆ Dog is ill or injured and owner has no money for the dog's care
- ◆ No time for the dog
- ◆ Too many dogs or pets in the home
- ◆ Divorce
- ◆ Bitch was not spayed and had a litter
- ◆ Behavior problems, including biting

Another source of dog adoptions is a rescue organization. These nonprofit organizations help find homes for dogs who can no longer remain in their homes. Some groups will take in any adoptable dog, while others deal only with specific breeds. Many breed clubs, such as clubs for Labrador Retrievers or Rottweilers, help support or sponsor rescue groups. Other groups operate independently and survive on donations and fundraisers. Many of the dogs given up to rescue groups come



Many wonderful dogs, both purebreds and mixed breeds, can be found at your local shelter. A training class of dogs of various breeds, mixes, sizes, and sexes—many of whom were adopted—at Kindred Spirits Canine Education Center.

with a history, both medical and behavioral, that makes it easier for potential adopters. To find a rescue group in your area, do a Web search. In a search engine, type the name of the breed you're looking for, add a plus sign, and then your local area (Labrador Retriever rescue groups + San Diego County).

THE INTERVIEW

When you find someone with a puppy or dog you might be interested in, either with a reputable breeder, a rescue group, or a shelter, the first thing to do is make contact with them. Make an appointment and ask if they have an application you can fill out ahead of time. Bring the family with you for the appointment and have the application filled out so you won't be distracted by that task during the interview.

Find out as much as you can about the puppy or dog. A breeder will be able to tell you everything about the puppy. A shelter or rescue group will not have as much information, but find out as much as you can. How old is the puppy or dog? Has she been vaccinated? How often and for what? Has she been wormed? Has she had any health problems? Has the veterinarian examined her? What is her personality or temperament? Does she get along with other dogs? Cats? Other pets? Does she like children?

Here are five questions to ask any breeder you visit:

- ◆ How long have you been active with this breed? Some experience is good, as it takes time to educate oneself as to the intricacies of both the breed and breeding itself.
- ◆ Are the parents of this litter available to meet? Seeing the parents will give you a good idea of what the puppies will grow up to be.
- ◆ What health checks have the parents (and grandparents) had? Some breeds have problems with certain health threats, including eye problems or hip dysplasia, so the breeder should be able to show you test results.
- ◆ What health problems have been seen in this breed? Every breed has problems, and the breeder should be able to discuss these with you.
- ◆ Ask to see the sales contract and ask the breeder to go over it with you. What is the policy about returning the puppy should there be a problem?

Here are some questions to ask a shelter or rescue group:

- ◆ Why was the dog given up?
- ◆ What background information, if any, do you have on the dog?
- ◆ Is he/she spayed or neutered? Is she up to date on all vaccinations? Does she appear to have any health problems?
- ◆ Has the dog had any training? Does she appear to have any training or behavioral issues? Is she housetrained?
- ◆ Has she shown any signs of aggression toward other dogs? Other pets? Or people?

Be prepared to answer questions, too, as breeders, rescue groups, and shelters will all want to make sure you are an appropriate owner for this puppy or dog. When they place a puppy or dog, they want this to be the dog's "forever home" and not a temporary home. You will be asked if you've had a dog before and what happened to that dog. You will be asked if you've researched this breed (or even mixture of breeds) and what you know about it. Other family members will be asked if they are in agreement that this could be the right dog for you. Other questions may concern your yard, whether it's fenced or not, and how the dog will be cared for during the day and at night.

CHOOSING THE ONE

Choosing just one puppy or dog can be very difficult. At a shelter or rescue group, you may find yourself wanting to save them all. At the breeder's, it may seem like all the puppies are the right one. Although a purely emotional decision is rarely the right one, emotion should be a part of the decision. You do need to have an emotional attachment to this dog, yet you also need to make an informed and logical decision. So keep your emotions in check while you ask the questions you need to ask. If red flags go up, however, and you feel something is not quite right, walk away before your heart gets involved. But, when your brain tells you everything is all right, well, that's the time to let your heart guide you.