

YOU HAVE MADE YOUR DECISION....NOW; *PREPARE TO BRING HOME YOUR NEW PUPPY OR DOG*

Bringing a new puppy or dog into your family is a large emotional, mental, physical, and financial responsibility. You should seriously consider all aspects of adding a pup/dog to your family...and, they SHOULD be considered a part of your family. All family members should be in agreement about this responsibility. If even ONE family member is opposed or not totally supportive, you are asking for trouble. You will be bringing a pup/dog into a NO WIN situation. This will create a stressful situation and the pup/dog will experience the negative fallout.

Be certain you have carefully researched different breeds and the care of the pup/dogs. The best analogy for adding a pup/dog to your home is their needs, training and care will closely parallel those of an infant or toddler.

Once you have successfully gone through the above process and have selected a breed. You must find “responsible” breeders of that breed. Purchasing a pup/dog from a pet store or backyard breeder is asking for problems and very possibly heartache. A “responsible” breeder will interview you, the prospective owner, almost as stringently as you interview them. Be aware that purchasing a pup/dog from a responsible breeder will cost more money than your other options. However, the financial loss and emotional trauma you are likely to experience and expend with the other options... more than justifies the extra cost. Your initial financial outlay will be “minimal” when compared to what you may get into through the other venues.

Once you are dealing with a responsible breeder(s), you may have to wait for your pup. Responsible breeders do not always have pups available. You may need to go on a waiting list. Be sure to prepare yourself to go through the involved process of finding a responsible breeder, having to wait for a pup. Basically, never be in a rush to get your pup once your decision has been made. Consider that once a husband and wife decide to have a child, there is a time lapse until the blessed event. Even if they become pregnant immediately, there is still a nine month delay before they have the child in their arms. Use this as a good barometer of what you should be prepared for once you decide you are ready to own a pup or dog.

NOTE: No pup should be removed from their Mom or littermates prior to 8 weeks of age. This is an absolute!! The reason is... what the pups learn from their Mom and littermates during the 6th to 7th week and during the 7th to 8th week is crucial to the emotional and mental development of the pup and can be difficult, if not impossible, to replicate. The pups learn the very basics of proper dog world social interactions, communications, and the preliminary elements of “bite inhibition”. The crucial aspects of this time frame from the 6th to the 8th week being spent with littermates are reflected by the issues that are common with “singleton” pups. This is when there is ONLY one pup in the litter or only one that survives. It has been long known that singleton pups often present more of a challenge than pups who spend their early weeks with littermates. One obvious issue is their interaction with other dogs later in their lives.

My Treasure was a singleton pup. Thank goodness her breeders were very experienced and responsible and they simulated as much as possible to replicate what Treasure would have experienced if she had had littermates. Even with what the breeders and what I did with her, Treasure did have issues related to having been a singleton pup.

Additionally, what the pup learns from the Mom during this crucial time frame is IRREPLACEABLE! Between the 6th to 8th week, is when the Mom will start her first basic “puppy manners” lessons. The pups will be disciplined and reprimanded and BEGIN to learn the initial aspects of appropriate dog/dog interaction, communications, and bite inhibition from the Mom (an adult dog). It is important to note that all of these “puppy manners” lessons continue throughout puppyhood, BUT, this is the start of it all. That alone should highlight just how crucial this time is for a pup’s proper development. Remember, that this time frame occurs during the IMPRINTING phase of puppy development.

Also, note that at this age, one week in a pup’s life and development equates to several weeks or months of development later in puppyhood. Let me be honest, even 8 weeks is too early for anyone but the most experienced of dog owners. Even I have never taken a pup prior to their 8th week! The earliest I would consider reasonable for the normal dog owner would be 10-12 weeks of age. IF a breeder is willing to release a pup to you prior to 8 weeks of age, this would raise a red flag for me!

Once your pup has been born and is ready to go to their new home, you will be ready to select a pup/dog. Many breeders have done temperament testing and are able to help prospective owners know the pup who would be best suited for their family. If this is not the case and you are the one making the decision, I tell people to let the pup choose them. People can make the wrong decision, but the pups/dogs are never wrong. When you go see them, ONE will choose you. They KNOW who they are supposed to go home with!!

Also, let me dispel a myth. Most people think the females are sweeter, more affectionate, and easier to train. The general rule with most breeds is the males tend to be more affectionate and easier to train. There are exceptions to every rule, but this seems to hold true for most breeds. However, both genders are wonderful.

If you are purchasing a PET pup/dog (as opposed to conformation “show” pup), you must spay or neuter them. There are countless physical, medical, and behavioral reasons for this. There are too many unwanted dogs in the world already. If you are going to be a responsible dog owner, one of the most important steps to fulfilling this goal is to make a conscious decision to NOT add to this overpopulation on purpose or by accident. If you want your children to experience the “miracle of birth”, get a video you can watch with them and discuss as you are watching it.

PREPARING TO BRING THE NEW PUP/DOG HOME

1) Be sure you take time to adjust your schedule. Raising a pup, owning a dog is very time consuming. Your time will not be your own for the first many months. The first 6-8

months are crucial. To be honest, the entire first year of your pup's life is when your pup will be shaped into the dog you will spend the next 10-18 years living with. This is the "imprinting" stage, this is their foundation. This first year is your time to impact your dog and your life with your dog more than you can envision when they are just pups. The amount of time and effort you put into the first year of your pup's life will be dramatically reflected in the adult dog they will mature into.

As with so many aspects of our lives, how much of yourself you put into anything will be directly mirrored in the results and rewards you reap. This is so very true with our dogs. So, make sure your schedule has been adjusted to fit the needs of your new pup. Know HOW you are going to meet the time and training demands of raising a pup. Much of these same elements apply when you "adopt" or bring an adult dog into your family. The same considerations would apply. You will want to spend the first months giving them the same foundation you would have provided had you had them as a pup. Do not expect they will know anything. Even what they do know, they only know as it applied in their previous environment, pack, and communication avenues. They will have to learn, adapt, modify everything to you, your family, your pack rules, your routine, and will have to learn your language sounds and signals and translate them into dog speak.

2) Purchase their crate, toys, food & water bowls, treats, and a supply of Bitter Apple.

3) Have a yard potty pen set up (see housebreaking article). Decide how you will keep the pup/dog confined to specific areas within the home. Buy baby gates and/or exercise pens to help block off areas or create secured areas. Know before hand what their secured puppy play areas will be and how you will ensure they are secured for a puppy.

4) If you already have a dog (resident dog), I recommend setting up the new pup's/dog's crate, pens, etc. for a couple of weeks prior to bring the new pup/dog home. This gives the resident dog a chance to get used to the physical changes in their environment before they are confronted with the intrusion of another dog in their life. Just as a baby affects every family member, including the family dog and requires adjustments from everyone....so, does a new pup or dog. Your resident dog will have enough to deal with when a new pup/dog comes into their "pack"; they should already have dealt with the visual and physical changes to their environment.

5) If possible, bring home a towel or T-shirt with the NEW pup's/dog's SCENT on it. Place it in an area where your current canine resident can get adjusted to it. Additionally, it is good to do the same in reverse for your new pup/dog with the current dog's scent.

6) Have a couple of T-shirts you have worn or slept in so they will have YOUR scent on them. These are wonderful to put in the crate of your new pup/dog. It will comfort them, make them calmer, and make their initial nights' sleep less stressful. (See Crate Training section) When possible, it is good to take something with YOUR scent on it to the breeder for use with your pup. This would occur when you have selected a particular pup and are just waiting until the appropriate age or time to bring them home with you.

7) Puppy/new dog PROOF your home. Look around, imagine you are a high energy, inquisitive pup OR a dog in a new environment...WHAT do you see that is really enticing? Much of this should be done from a "dog's eye" view. Get down on your hands and knees. See what they will see that they may get interested in or want to investigate. Move knickknacks from accessible areas. Move things that are scented. All trash cans must be made INACCESSIBLE. All shoes, socks, misc. clothing must be picked up. Newspapers, magazines, books must not be accessible. Give serious consideration to clearing the bottom shelf of a bookcase or other shelving areas. Move things that can be knocked over. Keep a close eye on decorative pillows, rug corners, couch or chair skirts. Electrical cords can be chewed, grabbed or tripped over...the item will crash to the floor...broken or hurting the pup/dog. All medicines, cleaning items, and insecticide or rodent items MUST be out of reach. Look at your counters, shelves, tables. Is there anything hanging off that they could pull or tug?

The best way to view this is to think about what you would do if you were baby-sitting a 2 yr old toddler!! You would do all of these things for the safety of the toddler and your possessions. Do the same for a new pup or dog. Add to this the fact that IF the pup or dog did get into something or tear something up, you would be upset at the pup or dog. The reality is they would be no more at fault than the toddler.

Go through this same process for your yard. Check your fence. Walk all around the perimeter. Make sure it is secure. Make sure there is no wire sticking out that could poke out a dog's eye or injure them in some way. Make sure there is no area they can squeeze through or get their head stuck. Dogs and especially pups can get into places you would never imagine they could fit. They can get their head stuck in places just like a toddler can get their head and their hands stuck. Take this into consideration for the yard and for the house. For example, pups can squeeze in between the wall and the refrigerator or stove. Be sure these are blocked so they do not have access. Pups can squeeze behind a bookcase or entertainment center. They can also squeeze under things. Again, look closely for these possible situations in your yard and in your home.

8) Get a supply of the food the pup/ dog has been eating from the breeder. You should either buy the same food OR if changing the food... do it on a gradual basis. Sudden change of food for any pup or dog can cause diarrhea. If changing the food, give them 3/4 of their old food with 1/4 of the new food for 2-3 days. Then, use 1/2 of the old food and 1/2 of the new food for 2-3 days. Then, you can use 1/4 the old food and 3/4 the new food for 2-3 days. Then, they can eat solely the new food.

9) SCHEDULE TO BRING THE PUP/DOG HOME WHEN YOU WILL BE HOME WITH THEM FOR THE FIRST COUPLE OF DAYS (for example, a weekend). This should be a time when you will be able to devote the majority of your attention to the new pup/dog. The first couple of days should be scheduled solely for acclimating the new pup or dog. Ideally, you would not have other activities that would take away major blocks of your time. This involves helping them to adjust to a new environment, starting their housebreaking routine, and just getting to know each other.

10) If you have a resident dog, it is recommended to allow them to meet the new pup/dog on neutral territory...the park or on a walk through the neighborhood.

11) Be certain you do not neglect the resident dog as you focus on the new pup/dog. This can cause the current dog to RESENT the new one. Make certain you do not constantly correct the resident dog..."go on, leave xxx alone", etc. Certainly, do not banish them to another part of the house. If you have to keep them separated for a period of time, it should be done so they are in the same vicinity...just separated by a baby gate or some other barrier.

11) Be careful NOT to only give your current dog their special attention and time...when the new one is not around. If you do, they will learn things are only good with Mom/Dad WHEN the new pup/dog is not around. So, make certain you play with the resident dog WHILE you are playing with the new one...even if that means one arm petting or playing on one side of the baby gate and the other arm playing or petting on the other side of the baby gate. Take them for walks "together". Give treats and praise to the resident dog at the same time you are giving treats and praise to the new one.

12) If your resident dog ACTS OUT in some way (potties in the house, chews something up, some behavior that is different from their norm), try to not make a big deal out of it. Ignore it, if possible. A strong reaction on your part will only INCREASE their anxiety that is causing the "acting out" behavior. Lack of a reaction on your part will probably allow the behavior to subside on its own. However, do realize this is your resident dog "communicating" their stress and anxiety. This means you need to be doing something different. Do not be upset at your resident dog. They are telling you they are upset. You need to determine a way to help them through their anxiety and stress. As their pack leader, sending appropriate and consistent "pack signals" will go a long way toward keeping the peace. (See the Alpha section of the book).

13) Do not let your new pup/dog out of your site. If they are out of sight, they are INTO something or pottying. You would not let a toddler out of your sight. Do not allow your new pup/dog out of your sight. Granted, no one can put their entire life on hold 24/7. This is why you have puppy play pens and secured puppy play areas.

When you have done ALL of this, then you are ready to bring a new pup/dog into your home. Once you are through the initial adjustment stages, you are ready to begin the real work. This means training/ teaching your new pup/dog the rules you want them to follow. The old cliché of GIVE LOVE A CHANCE is the perfect approach to having a new pup/dog in your life. Give them a chance to love you, give them a chance to learn what you want from them, give them a chance to learn your language, give them a chance to learn your rules...GIVE LOVE A CHANCE...you will be rewarded ten-fold!!!

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