



Guelph Humane Society Inc. "Over a Century of Caring"



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The Guelph Humane Society is a registered charitable organization that relies solely on private donations, special events and fundraisers to fund its many programs and services!

10 Tips to Help You to Choose *the Right Dog* for Your Family

by Beth Stevenson, Animal Care Supervisor

So you've decided to add a dog to your family... Finding a life-long companion takes research and consideration for the whole family, *before* heading to the Guelph Humane Society to select your newest addition. The following is a short list of things to think about:

- 1) **What are you looking for in a dog?** Do you want someone to run with, train with you for the half marathon, or go backcountry canoeing and portaging with? Or are you looking for someone to curl up with, or to be a permanent sleeping fixture on the living room floor? Be sure to research the activity level and aptitudes of any breeds that you are considering. For example, if you're seeking a lazy, mellow companion, it is best to stay away from breeds that thrive upon being kept busy, such as Jack Russell Terriers, Border Collies, and Australian Cattle dogs. Instead look for one of the breeds known to be couch potatoes; large breeds such as Great Danes and Newfoundlands tend to fit the lazy persona perfectly. Consider a retired Greyhound, often available through breed rescues, these dogs have provided entertainment to people for their whole lives, and now only ask a warm home to live in, love and affection.
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- 2) **Do you have any other pets?** If some members of your family happen to be of the feline variety, or if you fancy yourself a small animal caretaker, it may be best to avoid the hunting and herding breeds, such as the small terriers, and Shepherds. These dogs, often even if they have grown up with small animals, have a prey drive that is so deeply rooted, that they can be very difficult to trust with smaller pets.
- 3) **Do you have young children, or are you planning to?** Some breeds seem to enjoy busy children, while others become nervous or fearful and may act out aggressively child. This has much to do with whether or not the dog in question was socialized with children from puppyhood, or not until later in life. In general, many of the dogs that seem to be the best with small children are those that appear goofy and carefree, such as many members of the Retriever family. If you have small children, you may wish to avoid breeds that have a tendency to need a lot of individual attention, which you may not be able to give to the dog, if you are tending to a child at all hours.
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- 4) **Do you plan vacations where you would be able to take the dog along, or are you thinking of having a dog-sitter or boarding service watch your new family member while you go away?** If you are considering the latter, you may want to make sure that whomever you are thinking of asking to watch your dog is comfortable with whichever breed or type of dog you

choose to adopt. Some boarding facilities and pet-sitting services may have restrictions on some breeds, and it is best to look into these details before being stuck without options at vacation time.

- 5) **Are there any breeds which are regulated or illegal in the area in which you live?** Many communities across the nation have regulations or outright bans on some breeds or breed types. Some may have muzzle by-laws for dogs that are deemed to be a "threatening breed type". In some areas, the number of dogs or pets that are permitted to reside on one property is limited to as few as two. Make sure, *before* adopting a new dog, that you know the regulations in your community. For example, in the cities of Kitchener and Waterloo; Pitbull-type dogs are banned from residing, or even visiting, within city limits. In Guelph, there are no restricted breeds, but you do need to follow the provincial guidelines for dangerous dogs and Pitbull-type dogs.
- 6) **What kind of life expectancy are you looking for in a dog?** If you are looking for a companion for 15-20 years, it may be best to look into a small breed dog, as they tend to have a longer lifespan than most of their larger counterparts.
- 7) **Are you prepared to deal with any breed-related health issues that may arise?** For example, many large breed dogs, particularly members of the Shepherd, Labrador, and Mastiff families, may be affected by hip dysplasia or cruciate ligament problems. These conditions require costly surgery if they do arise. Many small dogs are prone to ocular conditions such as cherry eye or dry eye, which may require lifelong medication or corrective surgery. The "low-rider" breeds (those with shortened legs and elongated backs, such as Dachshunds and Basset Hounds) are quite susceptible to spinal problems due to the increased stress placed on the vertebrae. No matter which type of dog you choose to adopt, be sure to research any potential breed-related health concerns, and the proper prevention and management of each possibility.
- 8) **How much grooming are you willing to do?** Some short-coated breeds need only the occasional brushing and regular nail trimming and ear cleaning, whereas many of the longer-haired types require quite regular professional grooming and clipping. This process can be quite costly, but is necessary for the health and comfort of the animal.
- 9) **Does anyone in your household have any allergies to pets?** Many dogs that are advertised as "hypoallergenic" or "non-shedding" are falsely promoted as such. Most dogs will shed at least small amounts of hair, as well as dander, which is a known allergen. However, those breed types with double coats (thick, soft undercoat and top coat of coarse guard hairs) will shed heavily during peak seasons, in the spring and fall, usually.
- 10) **And last but not least, what is going to be the role of your dog in the family?** Are you looking for a protector, companion, motivator, entertainer, or someone to spoil? Many larger dogs will act as guard dogs through no action of their own, but merely by their presence in the house, or with their owners when out walking. If you are looking for entertainment and antics, most dogs will be glad to oblige when it suits their purpose, but some dogs are just born to take the stage.



The most important thing to do when choosing a dog to add to your home is to make sure you do your research; read books, speak with veterinary staff or friends who own or have owned different dogs, and experienced dog caretakers and trainers. Your hard work is sure to pay off when you find the perfect fit in furry canine form!

