

Responsible Dog Ownership

Responsible Dog Ownership Owning a dog is not for everyone and the decision to own one should not be undertaken lightly. A dog is not a decoration to bring out and show off to company or a fashion accessory to make the owner seem macho or loving. A dog is a pack animal and should be treated like adding a new family member to your family pack in the same way you would plan for a new child in the family. Do You Have Time For A Dog?

Adopting a new dog or puppy is a huge commitment. It takes a lot of time to properly feed, train, play with and care for a new dog. New puppies don't always sleep through the first few nights and you may find yourself getting out of bed several times to take the puppy out for toilet training. If the puppy is quite young it will require being fed smaller meals more often throughout the day. Older dogs which are already toilet trained may also require additional training in this department. Moving from one "pack" to a new "pack" can be a stressful ordeal for them and you may find it necessary to "un-train" certain behavioral habits. Dogs need a great deal of socialization. This means that you need to expose your dog to all kinds of sights and sounds around its home environment. It should meet children, men and other animals. Amateur dog shows are an excellent way to introduce your dog to a variety of other breeds and to interact and socialize with strangers, both human and canine. If none of this seems like too much to fit into your daily schedule, then you're probably ready for a dog in your life. Are Your Facilities Adequate?

A well-fenced yard is an absolute MUST for anyone who owns a dog. First and foremost this is for the safety of the dog. Dogs allowed to roam free are in danger. Any stray can enter the dog's territory and unaccompanied dogs can cause havoc with traffic and even get hit by cars. Dogs that roam loose are not at fault; the owner is legally responsible. It is also the responsibility of the owner to "clean up" after their dog. It may not be a pleasant task but it certainly is not a difficult one yet some dog owners go to great lengths to "make excuses" from doing this very simple task yet are outraged if they stepped in something someone else failed to clean up. If a dog is left outdoors, a kennel or adequate shelter should be provided with clean water always available. Depending upon the climate and breed, proper heating or cooling should be of prime importance. If you don't have a large yard, or you live in an apartment, you will need to make time to provide proper and regular exercise for the dog. Find The Right Breed For You.

If you've decided that you're ready for a dog, you probably have a few breeds in mind. It is very important to learn about these breeds before you make a final decision. A breed that you find very appealing physically might not have a temperament which suited to your personality or lifestyle. If you live in an apartment you probably wouldn't want to keep breeds which require lots of regular exercise like Greyhounds, Collies or Alsatis. It is often people who buy on impulse with no intimate knowledge of the breed, who later decide that the dog has to go. Take time to read books on breeds which interest you and talk with knowledgeable breeders and owners. Attend a few dog shows or animal rescue centers and ask lots of questions. Visit someone with an adult dog of the breed. Often the puppy is charming and cute but they can grow fast and the adult may not be at all what you had envisioned. CAN YOU AFFORD A DOG?

Be sure you're aware of what costs are involved with the particular breed you want. All dogs require feeding, that goes without saying and the larger the dog, the more food they will consume. What new owners often misjudge is the true cost of Veterinary expenses. Annual vaccinations are just the tip of the iceberg. There is also regular flea treatment and worming every 4 months which although some dog owners regard as non-essential, preventing a problem is often much easier than treating something more serious and cheaper too. Some breeds, particularly long haired dogs have special grooming needs. It is not fair on the dog to allow its coat to become matted and clogged with dirt and unfair on other family members too. Many dog owners are blissfully unaware that some dog diseases can be passed on and carried by humans, putting the vulnerable like young children and pregnant women at particular risk. Your Responsibility To Your Dog In Old Age

Just as humans are living longer, so too are our pets and Vets are seeing and treating an increasing number of geriatric illnesses. Muscular and arthritic conditions are quite common; these can also be brought on in over-weight dogs to cause complications such as [canine diabetes](#). If you're lucky enough to have a dog that lives into old age, the chances are that you will be faced, one day, with having to make a humane decision. This is one of the most difficult things you will ever have to do. You must be able to think of what is best for your dog, not what hurts you the least. It hurts deeply to hold your dearest friend in your arms and see him or her leave you, but it is selfish and wrong to allow the same dear friend to suffer. If you cannot bring yourself to be present, then at least make sure that there is someone who will help ease his or her end in the kindest way.

About the Author

Scottie is the collaborator of several publications, including The [Dog Diabetes Symptoms Management Guide](#) and the [Canine First Aid Handbook](#). You can contact him for advice about the [Canine Diabetes Symptoms Dogs Exhibit](#) at www.DogDiabetesSite.com/contact.html for reliable and free advice.