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EVERYTHING DOGGIE: From Choosing a Pup to Selecting a Kennel

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EVERYTHING DOGGIE: From Choosing a Pup to Selecting a Kennel

Are You Ready for Dog Ownership? Thoughts to Ponder Before Fetching a Fido of Your Own

Owning a dog can be a rewarding experience. Dogs offer us companionship and lifelong friendship, as well as endless entertainment with their antics. Owning a dog is a serious responsibility and you should think about it thoroughly before you bring a pooch into your home.

One of the first things to consider is what age of a dog you feel comfortable with bringing home. Will you have the time to house break a young puppy? If you would rather not deal with that aspect of dog training, perhaps you should consider adopting an older dog. There are plenty of older dogs to be found at your local humane society or animal shelter.

These dogs range in age and breed, and you can often find a perfect companion there. A benefit to buying a young puppy is that you will have trained it from the start and will be familiar with its personality as it grows into adulthood.

Will you have enough time to devote to a dog? This is an important consideration for you to make. Dogs need love and attention just like humans, and it is not fair to bring one into your home only to never be there with it. Same thing if you keep it in a crate all the time even if you are home. Your dog will want to be with you and will want to play with you. It is a very rewarding thing to spend time romping in the yard with your pooch or engaging in a game of fetch. If you have the time for it, a dog will provide you undivided love and devotion.

You should also think about what kind of qualities you want in a dog. Dogs come in all shapes, sizes and temperaments, and there is one to suit virtually any person. Also think about the size of your living space. Some small dogs are perfect for apartment living, although you should be considerate of your neighbors and not get one that barks a lot.

If you have a large house and yard, you may want a large breed as you can provide with ample space to run around. Do you want a guard dog? A friendly family dog? A lap dog? A dog that will go on jogs with you? Make a list of qualities you are looking for, and do your research.

What is your financial situation? A dog does not generally require a lot of financial expenditures, but you will need to spend some money on it. Dogs need a yearly physical exam at a veterinarian that includes vaccinations and heartworm protection. You will almost always pay a fee for buying or adopting a dog, so consider your budget for that as well.

Breeders will charge more for a pure bred with a good pedigree than what you can adopt a dog for at the humane society. You will also need to buy dog food, toys, a collar and leash, and treats. Some owners also like to have a crate on hand and a dog bed. You can spend as little or as much as you want on accessories for your pet.

Do you want a pure bred or a mixed breed? Pure breeds will cost more money at the outset, especially if you get one with champion bloodlines. The advantage to that is the dog will have excellent genes and should be the picture of health.

Some pure breeds will come from breeders who are not so careful with their breeding and will have genetic abnormalities. This will cost more in vet bills down the lines. Mixed breeds are almost always less expensive, and generally are healthier as their bloodlines and genes are mixed. You usually get the best of the different breeds that went into the make up. Both pure breeds and mixed breeds make excellent pets.

Owning a dog is a commitment, but the benefits far outweigh the responsibilities. Dogs are wonderful companions; they love you unconditionally and will be a lifelong friend. All they ask of you is to open your heart and home and let them come in. You will not regret it.

How to Choose the Right Breed of Dog For Your Family

A dog can be a lifelong friend and a welcome addition to any family but it is important to ask yourself the right questions before you decide to bring a dog home to stay. Think carefully about your lifestyle and size up your expectations before making a final decision.

First of all do you have children presently or do you plan to have any in the near future? Not all breeds of dogs are equally good with children. Some types of dogs are more tolerant of children and their exuberant behavior, such as yelling, laughing, jumping, running and rougher handling than are others.

Dogs that can handle playtime will work better in a household with little ones than dogs that cannot. Keep in mind that the number one reason that dogs bite people is because they are scared and are therefore reacting in self-defense. Breeds that can understand the excitability of kids are much less likely to bite. Two examples of good dogs for children are Labradors and Golden Retrievers.

Plenty of dogs enjoy the energy and companionship of children but can they tolerate them all of the time? You must take your child's personality into consideration as well. Would he or she be kind and patient with a dog or not? It is important to always teach your children how to properly treat an animal before you bring one into your home. Whatever you do, don't allow your child to abuse the family dog.

Are you a physically active person who runs, jogs or walks on a regular basis? If yes then opt for the kind of dog who has lots of energy and loves to exercise. Examples would be working dogs or herding dogs that are used to moving around a lot. If you are a more sedate person and are more at home in a comfy chair in your living room than you are running in the park then you need to choose a less active dog.

All dogs need to stretch their legs but some breeds are content with shorter bursts of activity, such as going for a brisk walk morning and evening. If you want a dog who will lie down and relax with you on your bed while you take an afternoon nap or will lie down on the couch while

you watch your favorite television show then consider getting a hound dog for example, such as a member of the hunting breed, a Basset Hound or a sight hound such as a Greyhound.

Size is another consideration. Do you want a big, small or medium size dog? Do you want a dog with tall or short legs? Do you want a dog that you can cuddle in your arms or one that will sit on your lap? Do you want a dog that can put his paws up to your chest and shoulders or do you want a smaller one that you need to bend down to pat on the head? Be aware of the fact that smaller dogs tend to move slower and also tend to live longer than do larger sized dogs.

Is a purebred or a mutt better for you and your family? Take the time to do your research on this one. There are different benefits and risks connected to deciding which is best for you. Keep in mind that all dogs give and receive love in their own way and no one type is superior to others.

What about age- is a puppy best for you or a dog that is fully-grown? Puppies are small and adorable but they require a great deal of time and attention. Puppies require training as well as plenty of exercise. Ask yourself if you are willing to make that much of a time investment with a pet? Puppies crave their owner's undivided attention and need a great deal of socialization and they love human contact.

They also need to be exercised many times throughout the course of a day. As well puppies need to go for regular veterinarian visits. Not only will you need to have lots of time to devote to your puppy but also you will need an abundance of energy, enthusiasm, and you will need to be emotionally available for your "shadow."

Separating the Fact From Fiction in Regards to Spay or Neutering Your Pet

Sometimes separating the fact from fiction in regards to spaying or neutering your pet isn't easy. There are generally eight most commonly given reasons why people choose not to spay or neuter their pets. Let's take a closer look at each of these.

The first excuse (or piece of fiction) is that a pet will put on a lot of weight and will become lazy.

If a pet does put on weight then it has nothing to do with its being spayed or neutered. That is completely false. Putting on weight is likely a result of you pet's not getting enough exercise and also overeating. Try to add more activity into your dog's life and don't feed them every time they give you those bashful looking eyes.

My dog never ventures outside so it isn't necessary to get him or her spayed or neutered.

Even though your pet is an indoor pet there is no guarantee that he or she won't accidentally get outside and get lost. Remember that there are many health benefits to getting your pet spayed or neutered. Animals who are fixed are less prone to many types of infections and diseases.

My pet will no longer be like him or herself.

If anything an animal's personality is likely to improve after they are fixed up. They will be more affectionate and sociable and show less aggressive tendencies towards people and other animals. As well there is less chance that they will wander away in search of the opposite sex. Dog who are fixed also do not spray (also known as urine marking) to stake their territory because they don't feel the need to do so.

My dog would be angry with me if I castrated him.

Animals have feelings but they are not as complex as a human being's. Once he or she recovers from the surgery they will forget it and they will love you just as much (if not more) than before.

It is unnatural to have animals spayed or neutered.

Human beings domesticated both dogs and cats many, many years ago rendering them "unnatural." It is people who messed with nature and by so doing caused the problem of overpopulation. Did you know that every day in the United States there are 70,000 kittens and puppies entering the world while only 10,000 humans are being born? There are many health risks associated with an animal giving birth while there is none connected with it remaining childless.

I want my children to see what an animal giving birth is like.

How many people actually get to witness their family pet giving birth? Most cats and dogs go into hiding when they are about to have their babies and often it is during the night because they want their privacy and they are in discomfort.

Letting your pet get pregnancy and go through the pains of giving birth just for your kid's to see it is irresponsible and cruel to the animal. It is also cruel to allow the mother dog or cat to get attached to babies that you have no intention of keeping. This teaches your children to be irresponsible and inhumane.

It is fiction to believe that you can profit financially from the birth of puppies or kittens yet many people believe this.

Raising a litter of animals is not cheap and what guarantee do you have that people will be willing to part with their money when many people give them away for free? Also shelters are full of animals that need good homes. Most shelters will charge prospective pet owners a small fee for the animal but will also have the animal spayed and neutered and give him or her the necessary vaccinations. Some shelters will even implant a microchip for identification purposes and provide a bag of food.

The fear that a beloved pet will die during the surgery is a big one but it is an unsubstantiated one.

Spaying and neutering are both commonly done surgical procedures that trained veterinarians perform on a routine basis. Often a pet's heart rate and breathing are closely monitored during the procedure and it is rare for an animal to die while it is under anesthesia. The benefits to your pet's health as far as spaying or neutering go far outweigh the risks involved with undergoing the procedure.

Want a Dog? Don't Go to a Pet Shop to Buy One!

When considering where to buy a dog, you have basically three options: a breeder, a pet shop, and the local humane society or rescue organization. The humane society, or other animal rescues, adopts out rescued pets for a minimal price. A breeder specializes in a certain breed and will have the dog's genealogy well documented. A pet shop buys their dogs from puppy mills and then markets them to you, the consumer.

Puppies that are for sale in a pet shop window are hard to pass by. Their sweet faces and wagging tails bring in many customers to the store. Pet stores rely on this marketing technique to get you into the store to buy things, whether it is a puppy or other pet supplies. While the puppies are temptingly innocent, what you aren't told is how the store acquired the puppies.

Pet store puppies are bought from puppy mills. Even if the store has a sign saying the pups are from local breeders, they are still from a puppy mill; it may just be one that is in the local region. Puppy mills are operated with the sole purpose of making money. The mother dogs are kept in small cages and are bred twice a year when they are in heat.

Their sole purpose is to whelp puppies so the breeder can make more money. Often these dogs never step foot on grass or leave their cages, and they are often sick. The females breed and whelp puppies until they die. Because the mother's body is taxed and sickly, often times she will not have enough milk and many of her puppies will die, as well.

The puppies are taken from their mothers at about six weeks of age and are shipped off to pet stores around the country. Oftentimes they are stuffed into small cages, and then packed into the back of a freight truck. The trucks deliver them to the pet shops where they are then placed on display to be sold.

Since the breeding is not strictly regulated at puppy mills, the pups are subject to several genetic disabilities and illnesses. They can end up costing their owners several thousands of dollars in veterinarian bills down the road. The pet store does not claim any responsibility for the health of the puppies, nor are the defects reported back to the breeder.

These puppies can suffer from physical abnormalities, severe allergy problems, heart defects, etc. Sometimes the problems don't show up for several years, and sometimes they become apparent right away.

If you are looking for a specific breed, a better choice is to purchase one directly from a respected breeder. Breeders will have the pedigree of the dog mapped out, and you will be able to see and interact with the puppy's parents and sometimes grandparents.

Breeders will warranty their dogs from defects and will want to know of any problems that may occur with your dog. That way they can remove the parent or parents from the breeding line. Sometimes the breeder will take the dog back and find it another home if you are dissatisfied with it or are unable to care for it anymore.

Another option is to adopt a dog from the humane society or other animal rescue program. Rescue dogs, as they are often referred as, are very glad to have a new home. They are neutered or spayed, so you basically pay enough to cover the costs of the surgery.

Rescue dogs may have been abandoned by their former owners, or dropped off because their owners felt they could no longer care for them the way they should. You will find that there are many loveable, friendly dogs just waiting to be adopted. Another advantage to adopting a dog is that they are usually already house broken. You would not have to go through the house training process like you would with a new puppy, thus saving some time and energy.

Whatever you do, please reconsider buying a dog from a pet store. It may seem convenient, but it will cost you in the long run. Plus, you will be supporting the puppy mills, and it is not fair to condemn a female dog to a lifetime of servitude. Think instead of adopting a rescue dog or going directly to a breeder. You won't regret it.

Does Your Mutt Have What It Takes to Be a Therapy Dog?

You have probably seen the stories on TV where dogs have visited nursing homes and hospitals. Maybe now you are wondering whether or not your dog could help in a similar line of work. Here are some of the things to look for to see if your dog has what it takes to be a therapy dog.

The foremost important thing to consider is whether or not both you and your dog have the personality to get into therapy work. Your dog should be well trained and friendly. He should enjoy going out and not be nervous about new places. He should be comfortable with meeting new people and allowing new people to touch him. A dog that is nervous or uncontrollable will not be of any use in therapy work, no matter how friendly he is.

You should also consider your preferences – are you more comfortable working with children or Alzheimer's patients? Are you comfortable around people with terminal diseases or do you get emotional or upset? You will need to find a group that you are compassionate for, but also one that you can keep your composure about.

Your dog will get his cues from you, so you need to be in control at all times and enjoy what you are doing. Knowing whom you want to work with can make a difference in how you train your dog as well. For example, will he need to be comfortable around children or wheel chairs?

Next is to get your dog ready for certification. There are several things to consider when doing this.

One important thing is to make sure that your dog is in good health. You will need proof that he is current on all vaccinations, has had his annual physical, stool, and heartworm checks, and is free of any parasites or infections. A simple trip to your veterinarian can take care of all of these. At the end, you should receive a health certificate to prove compliance. Keep an eye out for any unusual symptoms that might signal that something is wrong, such as excessive scratching or redness to certain body parts.

In appearance, your dog should be cleaned and well groomed. He should also allow handling and grooming by other people that he does not know. For some lines of work, he might be required to wear a costume or a certain type of collar. Make sure that he is comfortable with having any accessories being put on and taken off again.

Your dog should be comfortable around people. This includes being accepting of strangers and neither shying away from them or approaching them until given permission. He should be able to walk through a crowd of people without getting distracted or straining on the leash. He should allow petting and touching by complete strangers.

He should not startle or become defensive around loud noises or sudden movement. Have different people approach him and pet him to see how it reacts. While they are there, have them make a loud noise by dropping something or jump suddenly. It is ok for your dog to look surprised, but he should remain where he is and not act aggressively.

You will also want to consider training. A good therapy dog needs to be able to sit, lie down, and stay on command and without any hesitation. These are absolutely essential for therapy work and he should be able to do them effortlessly. Your dog should be able to walk on a leash without pulling or needing a constant "heel" command. He should not react to other dogs in a room.

If your dog sounds like he would be good with all of these things, the next step to do is get him certified. Most therapy groups will require that he pass the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen (CGC) test. This test evaluates behavior and temperament of potential therapy dogs as well as how suitable they are for use around wheelchairs, walkers, and hospital equipment. The therapy organization may also have additional requirements to the AKC's test that will require independent certification.

With a little bit of work and the right temperament, you and your dog can be on your way to rewarding therapy work.

Why Dogs Can Be Great Therapy for Humans

Some 17,000 years ago, humans first began to domesticate dogs from their feral ancestors, the wolves. Since then, dogs have been bred into a plethora of large and small varieties. They have been given jobs, such as shepherds' helpers and guardians of our valuables when we are away. They pull sleighs and rescue us when we get trapped in the snow. They guide us if our eyesight fails us, and for millions and millions of people they provide daily companionship and loyal friendship. It is of little wonder then that the medical profession is also taking a closer

look at our canine companions to see if there is a way that perhaps dogs can help out in the medical treatments of people.

Did you know that more and more institutional settings have recognized the therapeutic value of man's best friend? It is true! Dogs have become a great therapy tool for their human counterparts, and nursing homes, hospitals, and institutions that specialize in the care of those suffering from mental and physical handicaps are increasingly turning to specially trained canines for the therapeutic benefits that dog – human interactions offer.

The reasons for the effectiveness of dog therapy are plentiful:

Patients who are confined to a hospital bed will gain something to look forward to, such as the weekly visit of a therapy dog. Very often patients will remember the happy times they themselves may have experienced with their own pets and so it will give them a little animal to give that love to they remember so well.

Anyone who has ever had to spend a few days or weeks in a hospital will remember just how lonely it is to remain behind when friends and family leave, and day in and day out this loneliness very easily builds up.

Children who have suffered severe trauma and may have withdrawn from the world by refusing to speak or interact with adults may choose to interact with an animal that makes no demands and wields no clipboard but instead is content to just sit with them. Many times children who are electively mute can be observed whispering commands to a dog to sit or stay, or even just to fetch a little ball. Children who suffer from physical impairments will benefit from the challenge to walk beside their canine visitor, or even throw a ball.

The dogs that are used in therapy outreach programs have been tested and evaluated with respect to their temper, their ability to adapt to changing situations, their willingness to be handled by strangers, and their calm demeanor even in a room full of children who may not be so calm. In addition to the foregoing, these dogs are able to tolerate other dogs in the same facilities, so that there will be no barking and negative interactions that could affect their beneficial interactions with the people.

On November 15, 2005 the American Heart Association released an interesting study result, which evidenced that a visit with a dog for as little as twelve minutes has the power to lower blood pressure and to reduce the production of harmful hormones in hypertension sufferers!

An extended benefit is the calming effect that a little tail-wagging dog can have on even the busiest doctor and the most harried nurse. Easing a bit of the workday tension will translate into a calmer physician at the bedside of the patient and a more pleasant doctor-patient interaction.

Of course, if you are a dog owner, you might wonder if your canine friend is cut out to be a therapy dog. There are a variety of therapy dog associations out there that will be happy to test your furry friend, and also train her/him and you, but possibly some giveaways that your dog is a good candidate are:

- He is comfortable around people as well as other dogs and does not bark, snarl or growl at them.
- The groomer and the vet do not don protective gear when working with your pet.
- Your dog does not show fear of people who wear hats, use a cane, hold on to a walker, or have dangly jewelry.
- Your dog likes children.

Perhaps Charles Schulz said it best when he coined that unforgettable phrase “happiness is a warm puppy.”

Sweet Nothings: What a Dog Whisperer Can Do For Your Fido

Do you have a dog that is difficult to handle? One who jumps up on guests or who growls when you take food away from him? Training a dog does not need to be a difficult task, and a dog whisperer can teach you the most effective ways to make the task doable.

A dog whisperer knows how to talk to dogs in ways they understand. Dogs are pack animals, and by observing their pack behaviors, you can learn a lot about how they learn and interact. A good dog whisperer is proficient in this pack language and uses it to effectively train your dog.

When you bring a dog into your home, the dog assumes itself to be part of a family pack comprised of humans and the dog. It is important for the humans to assume the lead roles in the pack right from the start, or the dog will assume that role. Once the dog thinks he is in the lead role, he will act that way. That is when behavior problems begin to arise.

A dog that thinks he is in control of the pack will do what he wants, when he wants. This dog will pull on his leash while on a walk, essentially taking you for a walk instead of the other way around. This dog will insist on being the first one in and out of doorways, will decide when and where he will sit, lay down, and listen to your commands. This behavior will not get better as long as the dog thinks he is in control.

Enter the dog whisperer. The dog whisperer will teach you ways to speak to and handle your pet that will re-establish your dominance in the pack. You will learn the subtle language that packs use to establish member roles. By using voice inflections and body posture, the dog whisperer will show you how to get your pooch under control.

For example, lying on its back is a submissive posture for a dog. The dog that thinks he is in the dominant, or alpha, dog position in the pack will avoid this posture. The dog whisperer will show you how to place the dog on his back, making him lay there while you hover over him. This shows the dog that you are taking the alpha position and that he must submit. This will not be easy at first, but eventually the dog will learn that he must give up his position in the pack. This is an effective discipline for the dog that refuses to listen to you. Pretty soon he will get the hint that you expect him to act a certain way and that he better listen to your voice.

A firm, but not necessarily loud, voice is also essential in getting your dog under control. Many women find that their dogs will not listen to them, and often think it is because they are not as loud as men can be. However, dogs will listen better to a voice that is firm and calm than to one that is loud and high pitched. A good dog whisperer will have studied this effect on dogs and will be able to teach you how to use the right tone of voice with your dog.

A dog whisperer is also good at helping dogs that display bizarre behaviors. These behaviors include, but are certainly not limited to, incessant barking, chasing cars, biting and aggressive behavior, and separation anxiety. Sometimes these behaviors show certain fears and anxieties the dog has about his position in the pack. Other times it comes from a lack of understanding and knowledge about the kind of dog you have. Certain breeds need to have you establish that dominant role immediately, or the results can be disastrous.

If you have tried every type of training with your dog to no avail, you may want to consider the dog whisperer. It is a safe and gentle approach at dog training, and is highly effective. This type of training will also bring you and your dog closer together as you gain a better understanding of how to communicate with him.

He will also feel more secure in your family pack as he feels that you understand his language. Some might say the dog whisperer can work miracles, while others say it is pure genius. Either way, results have shown that the method of training a dog whisperer employs gets desired results quickly. That leads to a happier relationship between dog and owner.

Top Reasons to Spay or Neuter Your Dog

Every year there are more puppies born into the world than there are homes for them to grow up in. Sadly approximately sixty-four percent of all dogs that end up in shelters across the United States end up being euthanized for lack of adequate homes. The top reason to spay or neuter your dog is to prevent the overpopulation of animals, which can then lead to the untimely death of the animal. Spaying or neutering "is the single most important thing you can do to prevent animal cruelty!"

Animals that are spayed or neutered tend to live longer, happier and healthier lives than those who are not. The surgical procedure of spaying or neutering reduces and in some cases completely eliminates a number of health problems that can occur in dogs ranging from the mildest to the most serious. Some of these health concerns can be anything but simple to treat and also can be very costly.

For female dogs, spaying (which means the ovaries and uterus are taken out of the dog) takes away the worry of her developing ovarian and/or uterine cancer. This is especially the case if the procedure is undertaken before your dog has her first estrous cycle (menstrual cycle when she first begins to go into "heat"). As well the possibility of breast cancer is lowered tremendously for a spayed female dog. A condition known as pyometra (pus-filled uterus) is eliminated if a dog is spayed.

Neutering (the testicles are removed through a surgical procedure) eliminates the worry of testicular cancer, especially if the surgery is undertaken before the dog is six months old. As well, neutered male dogs are less likely to develop prostate cancer. Neutered males are also less likely to develop hernias and abscesses. All in all a spayed or neutered dog is likely to live a longer, happier, and more peaceful life.

Unwanted pregnancies are never something anyone wants to cope with and this means money and care as a dog owner you may not be able to give. The surgical procedure of spaying or neutering would take away this worry for you. Remember too that it is very stressful for a female dog to get pregnant and carry her puppies to term. By spaying her when she is young herself you take away future stress for her body and mind.

A smaller percentage of dogs will have to be put down in animal shelters if you act as a responsible owner and have your pet "fixed." During the years 2000 and 2001 in the county of Los Angeles, sadly 94,514 dogs and cats lost their lives in shelters for lack of homes. The majority of dogs that are brought to shelters are left there because of "accidental breeding by free-roaming, unaltered pets."

It is estimated that approximately fifty percent of the overpopulation problem in relation to dogs is due to males that have not been neutered. Be aware that it is not just mutts that end up in animal shelters but purebred dogs do as well. In fact thirty percent of shelter dogs are purebreds. Bear in mind the unfortunate truth of the matter, which is that "For every home you find for an animal that you have bred, a home is lost for a shelter animal."

Still there are other top reasons to say yes to spaying or neutering your dog. Spaying and neutering makes most dogs more well adjusted, more affectionate and more sociable to people and other dogs. In other words, a spayed female dog or a neutered male dog is simply more agreeable to be around.

The estrus (heat) cycle for a dog occurs usually twice a year and can last anywhere from six to twelve days. Your dog doesn't have to suffer any of the symptoms if you do something about it early on in his or her life. When female dogs are in heat they can cry a lot, both day and night (especially at windows and doors) and it is a pitiful cry to hear. Also they often show signs of nervousness and "stressed out" behavior and they can attract male dogs onto your property that you don't wish to have there.

Keep in mind as well that non-spayed or non-neutered dogs often exhibit more behavioral problems and do not have as sunny a disposition. They have hormonal cycles and concerns that their spayed or neutered counterparts do not. Animals that have had the surgery are less likely to bite anyone or get into fights. They are also less likely to leave your property without you.

Travel Smart: How to Keep Your Dog or Puppy Safe and Happy

In order for you to keep your dog or puppy happy it is essential to give her plenty of TLC and lots of exercise. Vary the types of exercises you do so that it is fun for both of you and boredom

doesn't have the opportunity to set in. Remember that regular exercise also helps keep your dog at a weight that is reasonable and healthy.

Take her for walks in your neighborhood and let her explore her surroundings. Dogs are very curious and interested in lots of things so encourage this behavior wholeheartedly and you will make her happy. Take her to dog parks and let her sniff and play with other dogs. Dogs are like people in this way- they like to communicate and socialize. Be supportive in allowing him or her to do this. Train your puppy or dog properly and always, always give her a treat as a reward. Dogs yearn for approval and when their behavior pleases their owners, they are pleased as well.

Being a responsible owner goes a long way in keeping a dog happy. Always provide plenty of fresh drinking water for your dog and make sure you buy the most nutritious dog food that you can afford. Happiness equals glowing health so take your dog to the vet as required for regular check ups and shots. As well spaying or neutering makes for a happier animal. When your dog has worms or requires antibiotics always make sure you give it to them as directed. Keep your dog's coat clean with regular baths and well brushed.

Being safe is another important aspect of taking care of your puppy and fostering a positive environment that ensures her happiness. One of the most important tips to ensure that your puppy remains safe is to make sure she is wearing an identification tag. In the event that she gets loose you will be thankful that you thought ahead to her safety.

This should also guarantee her safe return. Put enough information on your puppy or dog's ID so that whoever finds her will have plenty of options when it comes to locating you, the dog's owner. The most important information would include the dog's name, your address and your telephone number. You might want to include other information as well such as your work number, the telephone number for a vet, contact information for another person in case you are away from home, etc.

Make sure that the ID tag is designed in such a way that it can be read by a stranger from a distance. Some dogs that are lost are both unapproachable and may growl if an unfamiliar person gets near them and/or they are scared because of their predicament. It is advisable to ensure that your dog is wearing a "bright plastic readable tag."

In the event that your dog gets out and is wandering aimlessly in an area not known to him or her a stranger who spots him can simply see the lost dog and upon reading the contact information from a safe distance can then call the owner to come pick up the lost animal. Regular maintenance on dog tags is a must as they can easily be chewed by the dog and/or broken through everyday use.

Replace damaged identification tags as often as is necessary. Bear in mind that your dog license is not the same as a proper ID tag on the dog. Not all municipal offices keep proper records and very often dogs go missing not during weekday business hours but after 5- 6 PM in the evenings and on weekends.

There are also permanent identification options for your dog. You can have your puppy or dog's information implanted under his or her skin by way of a small chip that is approximately the

same size as a grain of rice. This special chip can contain all of your contact information and a trained veterinarian must do the procedure.

If your dog is found wandering alone he can be scanned thereby leading to the information about how to locate the owner. Some people include a toll free number on the ID chip, which makes it possible to quickly get in touch with a lost dog's concerned owner. This option is sometimes referred to as the "Home Again" ID tag. Another form of permanent identification is to give the dog a tattoo but this only helps if there is contact information included somewhere on the tattoo!

Can't Bring Your Dog on a Trip? Tips on Choosing a Caring Boarding Kennel

Pet owners all love their furry friends, but unfortunately they cannot always go with them. When it is time to travel, many people will turn to a boarding kennel. Here are some tips to help you find the best one.

Before you go, make sure that your dog is current on all of his vaccinations. Reputable clinics will require proof from your vet that the dog is vaccinated, healthy, and on flea and heartworm preventative. Check with your vet to see if any additional vaccines are recommended since your dog will be in the contact of other animals.

You will want to do all of this ahead of time – some kennels will not allow dogs in if they have been to the vet within the last 14 days. Remember that all of this is for your dog's protection, as well as the protection of other pets in the kennel. A kennel that does not require proof of vaccination should send up a red flag.

Now it is time to choose a kennel. First, think about what your dog is used to. Is he highly energetic and used to long walks, or is he content to sleep on the couch all day? Does he enjoy the company of other dogs? What sort of meal schedule does he need? Is he on any certain medications? Is he dependent on human contact to be happy? You will want to consider all of this when choosing a kennel.

You will also want to consider what type of kennel you would prefer to use. Some are just a standard kennel with a pen or cage for each dog. For those who do not mind spending the extra buck, there is the "bed and breakfast" style kennel where either the dogs stay in the home of the kennel owner or their rooms are furnished to look more like a real home. Remember that your dog is going to be missing you more than his bed at home, so he might not need the extra pampering unless that is more of what he is used to.

Before signing your dog up for his "vacation", you will want to visit the location first. Ask to see the areas that the dogs are kept. Are the cages clean? Do the animals have food and water? Ask how often dogs are taken outside. Are they taken for walks or just let out into a run? Will they have access to other dogs? Does kennel staff take time to give personal attention to each animal? Be wary of kennels that appear dirty or have a lingering odor. Check the outdoor areas to see that waste is being picked up. A kennel that is dirty is more prone to disease, and might also be giving a clue to the type of care your pet will be getting while staying there.

You will also want to find out what supplies you will need to bring with your pet. Does the kennel supply food or should you bring your own? What about bedding and toys? Do you need to make special accommodations for medications? Some kennels prefer that you bring your own supplies for your pet so that he feels more at home, while others prefer that the favorite chew toy stays at home so that it does not get lost.

Also ask about emergency procedures for your pet. If your dog gets sick, will they contact you or take him straight to the vet? Is there a vet on staff or one that they use regularly?

If interested, talk with staff about other services that the kennel may offer. Some will provide additional services like doggy day care or grooming services that your dog can enjoy while staying.

When you take your dog to the kennel, it is preferable to make as less of a fuss as possible. You do not want your dog picking up stress from you. Make sure that you have everything you need – pet supplies, vet papers, medications, and food. Say all good-byes to children at the house, and if possible, leave them at home while you drop the dog off.

At the kennel, make sure that the staff has all the information that they need from you, including emergency numbers where you can be reached. It is also helpful to review the pick-up policy for your pet so that you are able to get him as planned.

With a little planning, both you and your best friend will have a wonderful vacation!

Caring for your New Mama Mutt Before and After the Birthing Process

If you are expecting the pitter-patter of little puppy paws, there are a few things you can do for your mama mutt before and after she gives birth to your precious new additions. Following these steps will help ensure that she stays healthy and happy and that your puppies will grow up strong.

Eating Right

While your mama mutt is pregnant and then while she is nursing, you need to be sure she is eating plenty of high quality food that provides solid nutrition. While the mama is pregnant, her food consumption will be 1 ½ times the level it was before her pregnancy. By the time she has finished the nursing period, her food consumption may be more than two times her pre-pregnancy consumption. It is important for the food to be of the highest quality in order to keep her healthy, as well as her developing puppies. Never withhold food from your mama mutt. In fact, you might need to increase the number of feedings you provide her.

Dealing with Behavioral Issues

You might notice some behavioral changes in your mama mutt almost immediately after breeding her. Many become unusually sweet and loving after breeding, needing more attention and affection. Others, however, become irritable. Some even experience morning sickness.

As the pregnancy progresses, the mother-to-be will begin looking for a place to deliver her puppies. During this time, she might also start to become uncomfortable and, as a result, become clingy. When labor begins, she might become nervous as she searches for a birthing location. If she is particularly close to you, she might not want to be left alone during the birthing process. In fact, she may delay delivery until she can be with you.

To deal with your dog's anxiety, it is important to be patient, loving, and affectionate throughout the pregnancy. Just as with humans, pregnancy can be a very emotional time for your pet and she needs as much reassurance from you as you can provide.

Establishing a Birthing Location

To further help reduce your pet's anxiety while she is pregnant, you should create a birthing box, also referred to as a whelping box. This box should be large enough for your pet to fit in and move around in comfortably. Yet, the sides should be low enough for her to be able to easily see out and for you to reach in and provide assistance during the birthing process if necessary. Be sure to line the bottom of the box with layers of newspaper, which will absorb the birthing fluids. You can remove the top layer of newspapers after delivery in order to keep the area clean for the mama and her new puppies.

After creating the birthing box, set it up in a secluded area in the house. A closet can be a good choice, as is a little-used room. Be sure to show the box to your mama-to-be.

Preparing for Labor

There are number of signs that a dog is about ready to go into labor. As your pet's due date approaches, keep a close eye on her to determine when labor is eminent. Most dogs begin panting and acting nervous when labor is near. During the 24 hours prior to labor, many quit eating. If you suspect labor is near, you can take your dog's rectal temperature. If it is below 100 degree Fahrenheit, you can be sure your mama-to-be will be giving birth within the day.

Keeping the Puppies Safe

After the puppies have been born, you should transfer them to a small, clean box that was prepared ahead of time. This box should be lined with a warm towel, which can be warmed with the microwave oven. You might also place a hot water bottle or heating pad in the box, or have a heat lamp near by. If you use a heating pad, keep it on the low setting and covered with a towel in order to prevent making the box too warm. Heat is important, but a new puppy may not be able to move away from the heat source if it becomes too hot.

Making the Birthing Box Home

After your mama mutt has given birth to all of the puppies, remove all of the soiled newspaper from the birthing box. Then, line the box with soft bedding and return the puppies to the box.

Seeing the Vet

Within 24 hours after giving birth, you should have a veterinarian examine your new puppies and your mama mutt. At this time, your veterinarian may give your new mama a shot to help make her uterus contract and to encourage milk production. She will likely have bloody vaginal discharge for 3-7 days. If it lasts for longer than this period, be sure to consult your veterinarian.

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