

DOG LIFE

What breed of dog should I get?

■ BY HARRY KALAJIAN

Purebred or mixed, they are all good choices, depending on what you are looking for in a dog. Although I speak of purebreds in this article, what I say relates to mixed breeds as well.

Owners' preferences can differ greatly, so how do we choose? We must take everything into consideration: the dog's breed, age, gender, character and temperament, as well as the owner's environment, lifestyle, age bracket, type of dwelling, physical condition and job or retirement status. For example, if you're retired and not very mobile, don't choose a dog that needs frequent walks and a lot of exercise. Stay away from hyper breeds.

If you don't have lots of strength, don't choose a big, strong breed like a great pyrenees. If you're a first-time dog owner, don't buy a strong-willed breed like an akita. Certain breeds more readily adapt to new environments: golden retrievers, Labrador retrievers, golden doodles, Labradoodles and many medium-to-smaller breeds. These dogs are easier to maintain than large or hyperactive dogs such as the malinois (a Belgian shepherd).

Always ask yourself what you expect as an end result from the dog you choose. For example, don't choose a small breed for protection training, and



even if it's a rottweiler that can be trained, the right character and temperament have to be there. Even a rottweiler can turn out to be a ballerina and not a boxer.

All puppies are cute and lovable, but as they get bigger they are harder to control and maintain. Adopting an older dog is noble, as long as the adoption center is honest with you about the dog's background.

Ask yourself why the dog is at an adoption center in the first place. Sometimes people move and can't take their dog with them, or the owners have passed away. When adopting, use your head and not your emotions.

Always choose a puppy according to your lifestyle, environment and physical condition. Regardless of the breed and age of the dog you choose, you should take it to professional dog-training classes. You will save a lot of heartache at the end.

If you have allergies or don't like to vacuum your place twice daily, get a dog that doesn't shed profusely. But remember it will still need to go to the groomer.

Male or female? Both have their pros and cons. Money-wise, a male is less expensive, and you don't have to worry about heat cycles. Spaying is also cheaper with males than females. My opinion is that if you really want to neuter your male dog, you should wait until he is about two years old. For a female, the earliest time to have her spayed should be after her second heat cycle, and the best time is after her fourth cycle. Discuss it with your veterinarian. When a dog is neutered too early, it doesn't develop mentally and will stay young and active. It will take many, many years to calm down. When neutered later, the dog will have gone through the normal stages of its mental development and physical growth, with maturity just around the corner. If your dog is aggressive, neutering will not stop it from being so, and it will still continue to hump (if it is already doing so). With males, the only advantage you get with neutering is that when he scents a female in heat, he will not run off pursuing her. Also, many people think that by neutering a male, his penis will



not come out, but it still does.

My opinion is based on 34 years of seeing many dogs, some neutered and some not. For 90 percent of them, their behavior does not change. Before deciding what to do with your dog, discuss it with your veterinarian. Whatever you do, choose wisely. Take everything into consideration before buying or adopting any dog. Remember that all dogs need to be walked, exercised and trained. If your home is small and you have a big dog, you can compensate by taking it out more frequently and for longer periods. Adjust according to its needs, and socialize it as much as you can.

Added note: Do not use a laser light and make your dog run after it. That will get your dog to be uncontrollable when it sees any reflection, such as from your watch.

Have a woof woof of a month.

*Harry Kalajian M.D.T.,
behaviorist, ethologist & psychologist,
has over 32 years of experience
in all aspects of training.
Executive Dog Training Inc.
941-447-8234
executivedogtraining.com*