

## **THINKING ABOUT GETTING A RESCUE DOG?**

### **Step 1            Ask yourself the following questions**

Why do I want a rescue dog? Pity? To make a difference to an animal who needs a good home? Because I want an adult rather than a puppy? Because I like a challenge?

Companionship? Make me feel good? Give me a creature who needs my care? What function will the dog fulfil?

Do I have realistic ideas about what caring for a rescue dog might entail?

Can I be very patient with, and try to understand, issues arising from previous treatment?

Are my family all agreed about wanting a dog?

Will my friends and family be happy for him to visit them?

Does anyone in the family have allergic reactions to dog hair?

Will I be able to provide the company he needs? Dogs should not be left alone for more than 4 hours maximum.

Can I take my dog on holiday with me or provide suitable care for him if not?

Who will look after him while I am at work, or can I take him with me?

Can I afford a dog sitter/walker?

Do I have a time-consuming hobby, or can he join in?

Can I include him in all aspects of my family life?

Is my car/vehicle suitable for him to travel in?

Do I have enough space in my house and garden?

Am I prepared for the impact he will have on my home – furniture etc – and the extra work involved in cleaning up after him?

Can I provide him with the daily nourishment he needs?

Am I prepared to exercise him regularly, even when the weather is bad?

Can I provide him with some doggy friends with whom he can regularly play?

What kind of coat am I looking for? Do I have time for grooming? Can I put up with lots of shedding? Can I afford regular clipping and/or grooming?

What kind of health issues might the breed I want be prone to?

Am I able to afford the veterinary care required, such as annual vaccinations, plus any other treatment he may require? The PDSA estimates that the life-time cost of a toy dog is around £16,000, a small dog £21,000, a medium dog 23,000, a large dog £27,000 and a giant dog £31,000.

### **Step 2            Do the Research**

Check out the Kennel Club website ([www.thekennelclub.org](http://www.thekennelclub.org)) or [www.dogproblemsolved.com](http://www.dogproblemsolved.com) or Google the breed you are interested in to find out about breed characteristics. There will be pros and cons for every breed – depends what you are looking for. If you are looking for a cross-breed (cavachon, cockerpoo, labradoodle, jug etc), check out the breed characteristics for each breed in the parentage.

Go to Dog shows, watch TV programmes and ask people with the dog you are interested in all about them. Most dog owners are very happy to tell you about their dog.

### **Step 3            Find a Reputable Rescue Centre**

Don't get a dog from e-bay, Gumtree, a newspaper ad or someone you met in the pub or a car-park. Check out the local rescue centres or go online to the breed rescue sites if you have a particular breed in mind.

When you visit, ask lots of questions such as the following:

How long has the dog been in your care?

Has the dog been through a thorough vet check? Can I see the vet records?

What is your return policy? (If a foster home, you can also ask, 'If I need to return this dog, will you have a foster home that will take the dog back?')

Do you know the history of this dog? Was s/her a stray or an owner surrender?

What is your centre's return rate? (ie how many dogs are adopted out and how many are returned?)

How long do you hold on to a dog before placing it?

Does the centre have a 2-3 page form that you must fill out before they will talk to you about any of their dogs? (This is a GOOD THING)

Does the centre do a home check? (This is a GOOD THING)

What is their follow-up policy? Do they check on the adopted dog and how often?

Have they trained the dog at all? Using what methods? (plain buckle collar, prong collar, shock collar – euphemistically called an E-collar, leash correction or positive training?)

If the dog is in a shelter, has s/he been evaluated in a home environment?

### **Books about Dogs**

These are a few of the excellent books now available which can help you understand your dog and what is involved before you get her. Most are in paperback and most in the library system. Some will have websites with lots of information and video clips.

*In Defence of Dogs* John Bradshaw

*The Genius of Dogs* Brian Hare and Vanessa Woods

*Inside of a Dog* Alexandra Horowitz

*Dr Dunbar's Good Little Dog Book* Ian Dunbar

*How to Right a Dog Gone Wrong* Pamela S Dennison

*Don't Shoot the Dog* Karen Pryor

*Reaching the Animal Mind* Karen Pryor

*For the Love of a Dog* Patricia B McConnell

*Tail Talk – Understanding the Secret Language of Dogs* Sophie Collins

*Canine Behaviour A Photo Illustrated Handbook* Barbara Handelman