

# PUPPY SELECTION

by Carolyn P. Lincoln

Choosing a puppy is fun and exciting but it is also a serious decision. The puppy will become a dog that may be a member of your household for 15-20 years. Few people would choose another person as a roommate for that long based purely on looks; likewise, one shouldn't choose a puppy based on looks alone. Unfortunately, this often happens and it isn't surprising that there are mismatches of owner and pet. These mismatches often conclude with the dog in a new home or worse yet, euthanasia. What other criteria should one consider when choosing a puppy? The following list outlines some important considerations.

**TEMPERAMENT:** How the dog will behave is most important; just as that of any roommate would matter. Do you want a dog that is: quiet and relaxed or active and responsive, good with children and strangers or aggressive and protective? Those are just some of the qualities that vary with individuals and are determined by both genetics and environment. In order to determine the puppy's qualities, it is important to see the parents of the puppy to discover their temperament, to understand certain breed tendencies and to understand the differences between males and females. In addition, the puppy itself will have it's individual temperament or personality to consider. Some good sources for this information include your veterinarian, general books on breeds such as the AKC Kennel Book, the book The Perfect Puppy by Hart and Hart, and reputable breeders.

**SIZE:** Size will affect the amount of space the dog requires as well as cost for food, general care, and medication. As size increases, generally cost also increases; by just how much, will vary.

**GROOMING:** Some dogs will require regular brushing and/or professional grooming. Look at hair length and shedding patterns.

**COST:** Grooming, diet, and medication costs will vary with size, different breeds, and types of dogs.

**MEDICAL PROBLEMS:** Certain breeds are predisposed to certain medical problems due to genetics, size, and body type. Find out what these are. For example, Dobermans often get heart disease, larger dogs often get hip dysplasia, and bulldogs often have respiratory problems. Mutts are often the healthiest of dogs. Your veterinarian is a good source for this information.

Once you have considered these criteria and chosen characteristics and priorities appropriate for you and your family; consult various sources including breed books, your veterinarian, local dog shows, and reputable breeders to help you make that final decision. There is a breed that will fit virtually every situation and a situation for virtually every breed. It's important that you find the dog that's right for you.

