

Thinking about Getting a Puppy? How to Make the Right Puppy Choices

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It is that time of the year, the weather is gradually (and finally!) starting to improve and many families are thinking about getting a puppy. This article is intending to help such families make the right choices not just for them but for the puppies as well. It never ceases to amaze me that in this age of information explosion and pervasive internet access, many individuals continue to make impulsive decisions regarding where they purchase a puppy as well as what type of puppy they get. Here are some guidelines that will most certainly steer you in the right direction and help you avoid serious puppy health and behavioural issues down the road.

First and foremost, plan for your puppy! Make sure everyone is on board with the decision. If half the family is up to the challenge (and it will be a challenge!) while the other half is lukewarm about it, postpone the purchase. Raising a puppy is very much like tending to a human baby in the first months of its life. They need to be continuously supervised, shown what to do and what not to do, fed three times a day, let out all the time to avoid accidents, housebroken, properly socialized with both humans and other dogs, not to mention vaccinations, trained and walked as they get older.

Every single moment you invest in tending to your puppy and showing her the right way, pays off in spades later on in your adult dog's life. It is a commitment that can't be done 'on the fly' and without the help of the whole family. It is also a great opportunity to teach young children about responsibilities and that good things that come in small packages also require hard work.

Once everyone is on board with the decision, research about the dog breed you are interested in – does it suit your lifestyle? Are there any reputable breeders close by? Since getting a puppy should NOT be an impulsive decision, do yourself a favour and not visit pet stores that sell puppies with your children – if you cannot say 'no' to them.

When trying to locate a reputable breeder, make sure you ask around, find out about previous litters and where they are now, make sure you always get

to meet the mother of the litter (I usually also insist on getting to meet the father as well).

At the end of the day, it pays to do your homework, research and be patient when locating and purchasing a puppy. Know what you are getting (as well as getting 'into'), understand the breeding lines if you are looking for a 'working' dog versus a pet, and make sure you are ready for the new and wonderfully exciting arrival at home! Puppies are a lot of fun and should turn into wonderful adult companions and friends and not a nightmare. Doing your homework will start you off on the right foot.

This is precisely what I did as a K9 trainer prior to getting my brand new little bundle of joy. After a year of researching and waiting, we welcomed 'Sonic' Boom at *Spirit Ridge K9 Training & Rescue* on March 8th, 2008!