

General Considerations:

- Due to the increased quality of care, nutrition and other factors, the life expectancy of dogs is longer than in previous decades.

Life expectancy is often defined by size and breed.

Small Dogs: 15-16 years

Medium Dogs: 10-13 years

Large Dogs: 7-8 years

Of course, dogs of any size can exceed these expectations.

- If you have other pets at home, especially other dogs or cats, speak with an Adoption Counselor before adopting. Some older dogs may have a history for their previous households with other dogs and cats. An Adoption Counselor can give you helpful advice for how to choose your new puppy or dog and how to slowly introduce them to your home environment and your current pet household to give the very best chance of a positive adoption outcome.
- If you have children in your household, consider any dogs you are thinking of adopting and try to find out their history with children. Some dogs can be timid or fearful of loud noises and sudden movements and young children may not be a good fit. Speak with an Adoption Counselor about your household and lifestyle to ensure you are making the best adoption match possible.
- In most cases, puppies stay with their mother until they are weaned at 8 weeks of age. At weaning, they are slowly switched to regular food and water. Most young puppies in shelters are available for adoption around 8 to 16 weeks.
- Most shelters should spay/neuter puppies and dogs before adoption. If they do not, contact your family veterinarian before adoption to discuss setting up spay/neuter surgery.
- For many dogs, even young puppies, moving into a new home can be a bit unsettling. Despite all the best efforts of shelter staff, being in a shelter can be stressful for dogs. For some, they had been in a home, then a shelter and now a new home. For others, they may have been in a shelter, then driven a long distance to a new shelter and now are in a new home. This is a lot of change and anyone may feel some resulting stress.
- Keep things quiet and low key for the first few days. Offer a lot of time and patience while also setting up a reliable and consistent routine for them. In general, there is a good rule to follow when bringing home a new dog, known as the 3-3-3 rule.

3 Days – In the first three days, the dog may be feeling overwhelmed, scared or unsure, have a low appetite, sleep a lot, not be comfortable showing their true personality and may even test boundaries.

3 Weeks – They are just starting to settle in, showing increased comfort, figuring out their new environment and new routine, letting their guard down and showing true self. In some cases, this is when some behavior issues may start showing up because the dog is more relaxed and showing their true personality.

3 Months – They are usually finally comfortable in their new home, showing trust and bonds, they have gained a sense of security and know the routine in the home.

- The information included here contains basic considerations but is not an exhaustive list of all the things to think about before adopting a puppy or dog. We recommend establishing a relationship with a family veterinarian if you do not already have one and ask questions about things you should know before adoption. It is always a good idea to speak with family and friends who have had dogs as well as the Adoption Counselors from the shelter you are adopting from. They can provide valuable information.

Housing:

- Most dogs will integrate fully into your household, but it is a good idea to have some dog specific items such as a special bed and dog safe toys and chews. Some small dogs may appreciate a hole to snuggle up in.
- Depending on the scenario, you may require additional supplies to help acclimate to their new home. This can include baby gates and play pens if you have a puppy or if you are slowly integrating a new dog into a household where pets or children already live.
- Go through your house and have a look for anything that may be dangerous or undesirable for your new dog to investigate! Think of them as a new baby in the home.
 - Move the trash cans inside a cabinet until you know more about your new dog, even cans with lids!
 - Put away any hazardous cleaning products
 - Put people food and candy to high places and away from counter tops
 - Move any indoor plants out of reach
 - Close off children's rooms or put stuffed animals and toys away and out of reach

- Remove scented objects like candles and potpourri which may entice your dog to try a taste
- Clear off coffee tables and low shelves
- Check the yard for hazards and keep dogs away from pesticides/ insecticides
- Be sure all medicine is put away in a closed cabinet, including cannabis and cannabis edibles. Cannabis is toxic to pets.
- Never leave chewing gum in a place where dogs can reach. Most chewing gum contains Xylitol which is toxic for pets and requires emergency veterinary care if ingested. *Some other foods, such as peanut butter also contains Xylitol.
- If you have a fenced yard and choose to let your dog out for periods of time in comfortable weather, always ensure that the dog has access to clean, fresh water and a place to get out of the elements, such as sun and rain protection.

Food & Water:

- Puppies will be on puppy food (wet/dry) until approximately 10 – 12 months of age.
- Be sure to read the feeding guide instructions on puppy and dog food packages to ensure the proper amount is fed daily.
- Consult your family veterinarian for guidance on proper weight control and appropriate feeding schedules.
- Puppies and dogs should be offered plenty of fresh clean water every day.
- Monitor your dog's weight to ensure there are no significant changes over time. An annual vet visit with a weight check is a good way to do this.
- Always monitor your dog when you give them chew toys or chew treats such as pig's ears or bully sticks. Never leave a dog unattended with this sort of chew item.

House Training:

- All dogs should be house trained if possible. Some dogs with underlying health conditions may have difficulty holding it in, however this is uncommon.
- For young dogs and puppies, it takes a little time and patience and importantly a coordinated effort by all members of the household, but with the right steps, this can be done relatively quickly.
- For puppies and younger dogs, crate training is one possible way to house train as dogs do not like to soil the area where they are spending time and sleeping.

Veterinary Care:

- It is a good idea to establish a relationship with a veterinarian before adopting. Ask them questions in advance about the vaccine and preventative treatment schedule and probable costs associated with necessary exams and treatments.
- Most puppies will need to be seen for required core vaccines and preventative treatments after adoption. Many dogs may require additional treatments after adoption as well.

Enrichment:

- Most dogs need to play, exercise and have variety in their lives to be happy and healthy. With the wide variety of dog breeds, there is also a wide variety in the needs that dogs may have when it comes to playtime and sensory exploration. Try different things out with your dog to see what sparks their interest.
- Be sure to exercise your dog daily. For some dogs, this will mean a mandatory 2 mile walk or 45 minutes of fetch or frisbee every day. For others, it may mean a stroll to the mailbox or same time in the yard. Discuss your dog's needs with your veterinarian to be sure you are offering the appropriate type and amount of exercise for your dog.
- Offer snuggle toys, puzzle toys and dog safe chew toys to help keep your dog's mind occupied. There is no limit to the types of activities you and your dog may enjoy.
- If your dog is barking a lot, they are communicating with you that they need something.

Grooming:

- Grooming is more than just a bath and a way to keep the shedding to a minimum. It is an important part of a dog's overall health.
- There are a multitude of dogs in the world and each has their own unique grooming needs. Discuss your dog's grooming with your veterinarian so you know what your dog will need.
- Often weekly brushing of a dog's hair coat at home is enough, but some dogs may require additional grooming time or possibly trips to a professional groomer.
- Pay attention to your dog's nails and keep them trimmed to ensure proper paw health. Dog nail clippers or Dremel-style files can be a good way to keep your dog's nails trimmed. Speak with your veterinarian about the proper way to trim nails. You can also consult reputable YouTube videos for tips and tricks.

<https://nhspca.org/things-to-consider-before-adopting-a-dog-puppy/>