



Tricks for the Pawsitive Puppy

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Dog has long been known to be man's best friend and many families are getting a new puppy this summer. Often times it will be a brand new companion for the kids to grow up and play with. Others will be adopting a mature sole that needs a good loving home. No matter what your plans are there are many challenges to consider when adding a new canine family member.

Puppies are fantastic fun especially for the youngsters in the family. Fido will grow and mature rapidly within the first two years and develop an amazing bond with your family. In the first few months it is important to get their preventative health care. Vaccines have all but eliminated many diseases that used to plague dogs in days gone by. "Old Yeller" does not have to get sick from common diseases any longer with proper and prudent care. Discuss your pet's specific health care needs with your veterinarian. While there are basic core vaccinations for all dogs, your furry friend may need an immunization schedule tailored to the individual breed or life style. Active outdoor breeds may come in contact with different viruses and bacteria than indoor dogs. Dogs that go to dog parks, boarding facilities and groomers can be contagious and like day care for kids, will get exposed to everything as a group.

Don't forget about parasites. Intestinal worms are very common especially in puppies and are easily transmitted to kids especially with newly developing hygiene habits. These can go undetected and quite often need microscopic evaluation to identify. A de-worming protocol is critical to ensure good health for the whole family. Mites, ticks and fleas are also a concern and good control measures are available to eradicate infestations.

Caring for the family pet can instill responsibility for kids but make sure that all of Fido's needs are met as they learn together. Nutrition is very important and will vary with the type of dog that you have. There is a plethora of good commercial foods available for all budgets and as many resources for advice. Generally, the less expensive the food, the more that you will have to feed to get the same amount of energy and nutrition. Remember the more input the greater the output. Cleaning up afterwards is an important part of good responsible pet ownership.

With all that good food comes the need for plenty of exercise. Getting away from the X-box and television will be great for everyone as Spot needs to get out and run off some steam. Dog parks are great places to really get your pack out and let loose. But basic training is important and leash walking around the block can be a better learning environment without distraction from marauding playful pooches. Good socialization is the key to avoiding that ..."Doesn't play well with others"...bad mark on the report card. Behavioral problems can be avoided with good habits when they are developing puppies. Building loyalty and developing trust, spending quality time with plenty of play and training all set the stage for a long and happy relationship with your canine companion.

It is important to understand the type of dog that you are considering. They come in all shapes and sizes and a cute floppy eared, brown eyed puppy can grow into a totally different dog as an adult. It is important to teach our children that pets are not disposable but require love and attention throughout their lives. With pet overpopulation so rampant adopting your next companion can save a life. Sterilization is an important part of pet care. A neutered dog makes a much better family companion and provides many important health benefits.

Enjoy the long warm nights of summer with Rascal. A long and happy relationship starts with good habits from the beginning. Your whole family can enjoy and develop that special bond that only a dog can bring.

Next time it's back to school.... for the family dog as well, watch for basic training and behavioral advice.