Is Adopting an Adult Dog Right for You?

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Plenty of dogs need homes in this country. It is estimated that about 20 million animals end up in shelters each year. In addition, at your hometown market there are sure to be a few hand printed index cards on the bulletin board offering an adult dog for free. One great reward you get when adopting an older dog is that you can be sure you are providing a much needed home.

Be comfortable with your adoptee's behavior

Unfortunately, most dogs are given up by previous owners because they could not handle behavior problems. Finding out what you will be dealing with will help with potential problems. Be sure to take him out for a walk or talk to the previous owner or shelter personnel.

- Many shelter dogs have behavior problems because they were not properly socialized or obedience trained. Get a good collar and leash (with identification tags, of course) and get him involved with friends' or neighbors' dogs. Always be cautious when introducing your new pet to another animal.
- Pick up the book *Saved!*, by M. L. Papurt, DVM, or a similar guide to adoption... or read about your new dog's breed characteristics.
- Socialize him with different types of people and most important, make sure he will accept being around children.
- Take him to a reputable obedience class where he can learn some socialization and you can get advice.

With time and commitment this situation could be ideal for you, your family, and a lucky dog.

Health Concerns

Ask the shelter caregiver specific questions like these:

- Is the animal healthy now?
- Any known or suspected health problems?
- Has he been checked for worms?
- Has he been exposed to diseases?
- Any limping or other indications of bone or joint problems?

Remember that good nutrition and vitamin and mineral supplementation may reverse some of the health problems he may have. Get him started on a healthy regime right away.

Most shelters offer a free veterinary visit with adoption. The doctor will examine for worms, ear mites, joint, and other health problems.

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