Are you Ready for a Dog?

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| What do you think about when you picture your life with a dog? Games of fetch in the backyard, long walks in the country, lazy afternoons snuggled together on the couch? Maybe you want a friend for your children, a guardian for your home, or an athlete to train for and compete in Dogs ACT events. Or maybe you just like the idea of sharing your life with a devoted companion animal. A dog can be all those things, and more.    But before you bring a dog home, you also need to picture this: Veterinarian bills for routine vaccinations, checkups, illnesses and injuries. Housetraining, and the accidents that happen before training is complete. Losing your best shoes to chewing and your best rosebush to digging. Barking when you're trying to sleep, begging when you're trying to eat. Dogs do all these things too, and unless you're prepared for that reality, you're not ready for a dog.  Remember that owning a dog is a lifelong commitment with a variety of responsibilities; if you cannot meet those responsibilities, neither you or your dog will be happy. The average life span for a dog is usually about 12 years, although many live much longer. Before you buy a puppy stop and consider if your lifestyle will allow you to make a commitment of that length.  You will need to consistently provide your dog with food, shelter, water, exercise, training, grooming, health care and companionship every day of its life.  Of course, when loved and treated well your dog will return to you the love, loyalty and companionship that make dog ownership so rewarding and fun.    If you live in an urban or densely populated area, that is no reason not to have a dog, but you need to make sure you choose a pet that will suit your situation.    Puppy or Adult? The advantage of getting a puppy, aside from its irresistible cuteness, is that you can raise it by yourself from the beginning, and participate in its training and socialisation every step of the way. You can also spend time researching different breeders to find one whose particular line of dogs suits your wants and needs.  The disadvantage is that training a puppy requires a great deal of time and patience. Busy families should keep in mind that puppies cannot be left alone for more than a few hours at a time. They need plenty of trips outside, frequent meals, and lots of interaction with people. Adult dogs can be ideal for people who want a dog with fewer needs. Mature dogs tend to be calmer; some are already house-trained and know some basic obedience.    Rescue Groups  Some Dogs ACT affiliated breed clubs have a rescue group, formed to help purebred dogs in need of new homes. Dogs find their way into rescue for a variety of reasons. Some may have been accidentally lost or abandoned. Others may have been given up due to their owners' illness, death, or other change in circumstance. All rescue groups carefully screen the dogs in their care for health and temperament before offering them for adoption. The dogs are often already housebroken and know some basic obedience.    Rescuing a purebred dog is a wonderful option for some families. Rescue is a great source for older purebred dogs (although puppies are often available too). You may not be able to know the history of the dog you adopt, but you will still bring home a fine companion--one who is grateful to you for giving him a second chance at a home and happiness.  Rehoming is another option. Some breeders may look for a new home for an older puppy or young dog that is not maturing into an ideal show dog. These breeders then look for a loving, responsible home where the dog will be a pet, not a show dog. Some breeders also rehome older dogs that are retired from showing and breeding. Sometimes they feel they are not able to give these dogs the love and attention they deserve and sometimes they just don’t get along with the young up-and-coming show prospects and would be better suited in a pet home where they can be an only dog.  If you are interested in adopting an adult dog, please contact the associated breed or group club.  Now that you have determined you are ready to add the joy of a dog to your life and your family you will need to decide which breed is right for your age and stage of life. |