

SHORTCUT TO A PERFECT PET

by Barbara Fleischaker, copyright 1981

An older puppy or adult dog makes an ideal pet for most households, but it is particularly suitable in homes where there are very small children, senior citizens, or where family members work, having to leave a pet unattended for long periods of time.

Families who adopt a dog old enough to have outgrown the chewing stage that all puppies go through are indeed getting a bargain. They can avoid the hassle of house breaking and know exactly what they are getting in terms of size, grooming, and above all, in temperament and personality. They can make sure the dog likes and gets along with children and other animals.

The adult dog has usually outgrown the jumping, nipping, clumsy exuberance of the puppy, making him a better mannered, but no less loving and enthusiastic pet. He is ready for and capable of any training that you may wish to give him. He can usually keep himself amused and busy for periods of time by himself without being destructive. He is more tolerant of small children and more careful with fragile older people. He has learned to stay out of the way and to avoid barging into or tripping people.

MOST ADULT DOGS OR OLDER PUPPIES WILL ADAPT QUICKLY AND VERY WELL TO A NEW HOME. They will give undivided loyalty and will return the love they receive from you a hundred times over.

It is important to learn as much about a dog's history as possible, his habits, past history, diet, daily routine, his likes and dislikes. It is very important that all family members meet the dog and agree that it is what they want, before adoption. Rescue groups try to find out as much about the dogs they are going to place as possible.

able, doing the initial screening for you. If you are adopting from a dog pound or humane facility, spend at least two hours (more if possible) with the dog before you decide if he will fit into your lifestyle, household, and neighborhood. If you are considering a pure bred dog who has various characteristics bred into him, talk with or consult an experienced person who knows about that particular breed.

For a successful adoption, it is best to have the person with primary responsibility for the dog's care take a few days off to be at home full time. Show the new dog where it is to live and sleep. He should be shown where his food bowl and water dish are to be kept, where he is to relieve himself and, above all, what behavior you find acceptable or unacceptable in your home. He needs the constant reassurance that you love him and he will quickly learn the new routine he is expected to follow.

Wait until you have had him for about a month before beginning formal obedience training so that you have his love and trust, he has become accustomed to his new environment, and has regained his confidence. Even dogs that have had obedience, field, herding, or other training need to attend classes with their new owners so that owner and dog become a team. All dogs, no matter what size or what breed, no matter how old, need basic obedience. There are a number of excellent classes in the Denver Metro Area, at very small expense, where you can learn to train your dog to be a happy, responsive, and obedient family member.

The joys of adopting an adult dog are many, but the greatest joy will be the boundless love and devotion you will receive for the life of your