



Responsible Dog Ownership – What Does It Mean?

When you look at a young puppy, do you just see a cute, cuddly bundle of fur, or do you see a living creature that will require time, money and commitment for a lifetime?

If you haven't considered the implications of the second, you haven't fully considered the responsibilities you will incur taking on a puppy or a dog of any age. We recommend that you take a good, hard look at your lifestyle, including your family responsibilities, job commitments and financial considerations, before you make this kind of commitment to any animal. Failure to do so on the part of many Americans is the reason more than 11 million dogs are relinquished to shelters every year, abandoned far from home or left alone in a desolate yard chained to a doghouse for a miserable lifetime.

Responsible dog ownership includes many things, including:

- Providing for basic needs, including food, water and shelter;
- Ensuring regular veterinary care, including vaccinations and annual exams, in addition to providing for the expense of any emergency care that may be required;
- Spaying or neutering of your dog or puppy;
- Regular exercise and interactive play time, on a daily basis;
- Leashing your dog any time he is not in a completely enclosed, secure fenced-in area, to prevent accidents and other tragedies;
- Licensing of your pet in compliance with state, county or local ordinances;
- Preventing nuisance behavior, such as incessant barking, running at large, etc.;
- Training: using gentle, effective training methods to prevent unwanted behaviors and teach your dog alternative, desirable behaviors, to make your dog a better pet;
- Socialization: making your dog a good citizen by exposing him to a variety of experiences, people and places and making sure he can behave appropriately in various settings;
- Commitment: having the fortitude to work through behavior problems, with help from professionals when necessary, and considering your dog's needs when making lifestyle changes;

And, most importantly,

- Providing love and companionship, every single day of your dog's life, not just when it is convenient.