

### **Interested in buying a Newf?**

You must be or you wouldn't be reading this. You've already heard how marvelous Newfies are. Well, I think you should also hear, before it's too late, that **NEWFOUNDLANDS ARE NOT THE PERFECT BREED FOR EVERYONE**. As a breed, they have a few characteristics that some people find charming, but that some people find mildly unpleasant, and some people find downright intolerable. There are different breeds for different needs. There are over 200 breeds of dogs in the world. Maybe you'd be better off with some other breed. Maybe you'd be better off with a cat. Maybe you'd be better off with goldfish, a parakeet, a hamster, or some house-plants.

### **Don't buy a Newfoundland if you are attracted to the breed chiefly by its appearance.**

The appearance of the Newfoundlands you have seen in the show ring is the product of many hours of bathing and grooming. This carefully constructed beauty is fleeting: a few minutes of freedom, romping through the fields or strolling in the rain restores the "natural" look. The natural look of the Newfie is that of a large, shaggy farm dog, usually with some dirt and weeds clinging to his tousled coat. The true beauty of the Newf lies in his character, not in his appearance.

### **Don't buy a Newfoundland if you are unwilling to share your house, yard, and your life with your dog.**

Newfies were bred to share in the work of the family (fishing, pulling carts, etc.) and to spend most of their waking hours working with the family. They thrive on companionship and they want to be wherever you are. They are happiest living with you in your house and going with you when you go out. While they usually tolerate being left at home by themselves (preferably with a dog-door giving access to the fenced yard), they should not be completely relegated to the backyard or kennel. A puppy exiled from the house is likely to grow up to be unsociable, unruly, and unhappy. He may well develop pastimes, such as digging or barking, that will displease you and/or your neighbors. An adult so exiled will be miserable too. If you don't strongly prefer to have your dog's companionship as much as possible, and sharing many of your activities by day, you should choose a breed less oriented to human companionship. Likewise if your job or other obligations prevent you from spending much time with your dog. No dog is really happy without companionship. A better choice would be a cat, as they are solitary by nature.

### **Don't buy a Newfoundland if you don't intend to train your dog.**

Basic obedience and household rules training is NOT optional for the Newf. As an absolute minimum, you must teach him to reliably respond to commands to come, to lie down, to stay, and to walk at your side, on or off leash and regardless of temptations. You must also teach him to respect your household rules: e.g. is he allowed to get on the furniture? is he allowed to beg at the table? What you allow or forbid is unimportant, but it is \*critical\* that you, not the dog, make these choices and that you enforce your rules consistently. You must commit yourself to attending an 8 to 10 week series of weekly lessons at a local obedience club or with a professional trainer, and to doing one or two short (5 to 20 minutes) homework sessions per day. As commands are learned, they must be integrated into your daily life by being used whenever appropriate, and enforced consistently. Young Newfie puppies are relatively easy to train: they are eager to please, intelligent, and calm-natured, with a relatively good attention span. Once a Newfie has learned something, he tends to retain it well. Your cute, sweet little Newf puppy will grow up to be a large, powerful dog. If he has grown up respecting you and your rules, then all his physical and mental strength will work for you. But if he has grown up without rules and guidance from you, surely he will make his own rules, and his physical and mental powers will often act in opposition to your needs and desires.

### **Don't buy a Newfoundland if you lack leadership (self-assertive) personality.**

Dogs do not believe in social equality. They live in a social hierarchy led by a pack-leader (Alpha). The alpha dog is generally benevolent, affectionate, and non-bullying towards his subordinates; but there is never any doubt in his mind or in theirs that the alpha is the boss and makes the rules. Whatever the breed, if you do not assume the leadership, the dog will do so sooner or later and with more or less unpleasant consequences for the abdicating owner. Like the untrained dog, the pack-leader dog makes his own rules and enforces them against other members of the household by means of a dominant physical posture and a hard-eyed stare, followed by a snarl, then a knockdown blow or a bite. Breeds differ in tendencies towards social dominance; and individuals within a breed differ considerably. You do not have to have the personality or mannerisms of a Marine boot camp Sergeant, but you do have to have the calm, quiet self-assurance and self-assertion of the successful parent ("Because I'm your mother, that's why.") or successful grade-school teacher. If the whole idea of "being the boss" frightens or repels you, don't get a dog at all. Cats don't expect leadership. A gerbil or hamster, or fish doesn't need leadership or household rules. Leadership and training are inextricably intertwined: leadership personality enables you to train your dog, and being trained by you reinforces your dog's perception of you as the alpha.

**Don't buy a Newfie if you don't value laid-back companionship and calm affection.**

A Newf becomes deeply attached and devoted to his own family, but he doesn't "wear his heart on his sleeve." Some are noticeably reserved, others are more outgoing, but few adults are usually exuberantly demonstrative of their affections. They like to be near you, usually in the same room, preferably on a comfortable pad or cushion in a corner or under a table, just "keeping you company." They enjoy conversation, petting and cuddling when you offer it, but they are moderate and not overbearing in coming to you to demand much attention. They are emotionally sensitive to their favourite people: when you are joyful, proud, angry, or grief-stricken, your Newf will immediately perceive it and will believe himself to be the cause. The relationship can be one of great mellows, depth and subtlety; it is a relation on an adult-to-adult level, although certainly not one devoid of playfulness. As puppies, of course, they will be more dependent, more playful, and more demonstrative. In summary, adult Newfs tend to be sober and thoughtful, rather than giddy clowns or sycophants.

**Don't buy a Newfie if you are fastidious about your home.**

The Newfoundland's thick shaggy coat and his love of playing in water and mud combine to make him a highly efficient transporter of dirt into your home, depositing same on your floors and rugs and possibly also on your furniture and clothes. One Newf coming in from a few minutes outdoors on a rainy day can turn an immaculate house into an instant hog wallow. His full chest soaks up water every time he takes a drink, then releases same drippingly across your floor or soppingly into your lap. Newfoundlands are seasonal shedders, and in spring can easily fill a trash bag with balls of hair from a grooming session, or clog a vacuum cleaner if left to shed in the house. I don't mean to imply that you must be a slob or slattern to live happily with a Newf, but you do have to have the attitude that your dog's company means more to you than does neatness, and you do have to be comfortable with a less than immaculate house.

**Don't buy a Newfoundland if you find drool totally repellent.**

Most Newfie owners begin with some degree of distaste for drool, but as this is an integral part of many Newfs, this dislike usually progresses to some level of nonchalance. A sure sign of a Newf addict is that not only do they not understand other people's squeamishness for this substance, they spend many hours trying to come up with useful purposes for the gallons of drool that can be produced on a regular basis. Some say that the world record "drool toss" from an adult Newf is over 20 feet! This makes your walls and ceilings well within reach of even an average drooler. Newfie's drool because of their jaw and mouth structure, which allows them to breath while performing water rescue, this is a quality inherent in the breed. If you cannot get used to the idea of drool in your house, then try one of the many breeds of dogs that do not drool. Newfs are definitely not in this category. Although I have heard of cats who drool, the quantity is not remotely comparable, and hamsters don't drool at all.

**Don't buy a Newfie if you dislike doing regular grooming.**

The thick shaggy Newfoundland coat demands regular grooming, not merely to look tolerably nice, but also to preserve the health of skin underneath and to detect and remove foxtails, ticks, and other dangerous invaders. For "pet" grooming, you should expect to spend 10-15 minutes a day (e.g. while listening to music or watching television) on alternate days or half an hour twice a week. Of course any time your Newf gets into cockleburrs, filigree, or other coat-adhering vegetation, you are likely to be in for an hour or more of remedial work. "Pet" grooming does not require a great deal of skill, but does require time and regularity.

**Don't buy a Newfie if you dislike daily exercise.**

Newfs need exercise to maintain the health of heart and lungs, and to maintain muscle tone. Because of his mellow, laid-back, often lazy, disposition, your Newfie will not give himself enough exercise unless you accompany him or play with him, or he has a canine companion to romp with. If providing this exercise is beyond you, physically or temperamentally, then choose one of the many small and energetic breeds that can exercise itself within your fenced yard. Most of the Toys and Terriers fit this description. Cats can be exercised indoors with mouse-on-a-string toys. Hamsters will exercise themselves on a wire wheel. House plants don't even need exercise.

**Don't buy a Newfie if you believe that dogs should run "free."**

Whether you live in town or country, no dog can safely be left to run "free" outside your fenced property and without your direct supervision and control. The price of such "freedom" is inevitably injury or death: from dogfights, from automobiles, from the Pound or from justifiably irate neighbours. Even though Newfs are home-loving and less inclined to roam than most breeds, an unfenced Newf is destined for disaster. A thoroughly obedience-trained Newfie can enjoy the limited and supervised freedom of off-leash walks with you in appropriately chosen environments. If you don't want the responsibility of confining and supervising your pet, then no breed of dog is suitable for you. A neutered cat will survive such irresponsibly given "freedom" somewhat longer than a dog,

but will eventually come to grief. A better answer for those who crave a "free" pet is to set out feeding stations for some of the indigenous wildlife, such as raccoons, which will visit for handouts and which may eventually tolerate your close observation.

**Don't buy a Newfoundland if you can't afford to buy, feed, and provide healthcare for one.**

Newfoundlands are not a cheap breed to buy, as running a careful breeding program with due regard for temperament, trainability, and physical soundness (hips especially) cannot be done cheaply. The "bargain" puppy from a "back-yard breeder" who unselectively mates any two Newfs who happen to be of opposite sex may well prove to be extremely costly in terms of bad temperament, bad health, and lack of essential socialization. Whatever the initial cost of your Newfoundland, the upkeep will not be cheap. Being large dogs, Newfs eat relatively large meals. (Need I add that what goes in one end must eventually come out the other?) Large dogs tend to have larger veterinary bills, as the amount of anaesthesia and of most medications is proportional to body weight. Spaying or neutering, which costs more for larger dogs, is an essential expense for virtually all pet Newfs, as it "takes the worry out of being close," prevents serious health problems in later life, and makes the dog a more pleasant companion. Professional grooming, if you use it, is expensive. An adequate set of grooming tools for use at home adds up to a tidy sum, but once purchased will last many dog-lifetimes.

**Don't buy a Newfie if you want the "latest, greatest ferocious killer attack dog."**

The Newfoundland's famous disposition as the "Gentle Giant" is not a fable, a Newf with the typical disposition of the breed would prefer to slobber and wag at a criminal than attack one. Also because of selective breeding for water rescue, Newfies are "soft-mouthed" dogs. In contrast to the protection-trained dog, trained to bite on direct command or in reaction to direct physical assault on his master, the "deterrent dog" dissuades the vast majority of aspiring burglars, rapists, and assailants by his presence, his appearance, and his demeanour. Seeing such dog, the potential wrong-doer simply decides to look for a safer victim elsewhere. For this job, all that is needed is a dog that is large and that appears to be well-trained and unafraid. The Newfoundland can serve this role admirably, but he cannot be considered to be a true "watch dog".

**Don't buy a Newfoundland if you are not willing to commit yourself for the dog's entire lifetime.**

No dog deserves to be cast out because his owners want to move to a no-pet apartment, or because he is no longer a cute puppy, or didn't grow up to be a beauty contest winner, or because his owners through lack training have allowed him to become an unruly juvenile delinquent with a repertoire of undesirable behaviours. Be sure to contact your breeder if you are beginning to have difficulties in training your Newfie, so these can be resolved. Be sure to make arrangements in your will or with your family to ensure continued care or an adoptive home for your Newfoundland if you should pre-decease him. The life span of a Newfoundland is about 10 years. If that seems too long a time for you to give an unequivocal loyalty to your Newfoundland, then please do not get one! Indeed, as most dogs have a life expectancy that is as long or longer, please do not get any dog.

**In Conclusion**

If all the preceding "bad news" about Newfies hasn't turned you away from the breed, then by all means DO GET A NEWF! They are every bit as wonderful as you have heard! If buying a puppy, be sure to shop carefully for a \*responsible\* and \*knowledgeable\* breeder who places high priority on breeding for sound temperament and trainability, and good health in all matings. Such a breeder will interrogate and educate potential buyers carefully. Such a breeder will continue to be available for advice and consultation for the rest of the dog's life and will insist on receiving the dog back if ever you are unable to keep it. If the only questions the breeder is asking is "will that be cash or cheque", keep looking, good breeders are intensely interested in the future of their pup, they ask a lot of questions about your lifestyle and accommodations.

Be prepared to wait for a suitable puppy. Unlike a furniture or appliance purchase, puppies are not always available. It is not a bad thing to have to wait for your chosen breeder to have a puppy for you - it gives you time to prepare and virtually eliminates "impulse buying". There are many things that can be bought on impulse, but a living, breathing creature is not one of them.

*This article, which has been adapted from: DON'T BUY A BOUVIER! by Pam Green (c.1992), was written many years ago. It has become a notorious classic in Bouvier circles and has been reprinted many times by clubs to use for the education of prospective Bouvier owners. She gives her permission freely to all who wish to reprint and distribute it in hopes of saving innocent dogs from neglect and abandonment by those who should never have acquired them in the first place.*