

Why Adopt a Senior Dog?

By Sherri Franklin and Liz Brooking of Mutttville Senior Dog Rescue

The need for senior dog adoption is great. What makes each of the circumstances creating this need even more saddening is the fact that, despite the wonderful attributes of older dogs and all the best efforts of most shelters, these dogs are frequently overlooked in favor of puppies and younger animals. The ageism that causes seniors to be passed over is a prejudice without merit, as oftentimes it's the older dog that is best suited for a happy household and a lasting marriage of dog and family.

Here's why.

What You See is What You Get

With an older dog, what you see is what you get. There are no surprises. Their physical size is established so there are no mysteries about whether they'll exceed the weight limit for your apartment, and by and large, their temperament and personality are also fully developed. In other words, they've become what and who they are going to be.

Of course, you can expect your dog's confidence will blossom as he adjusts to his new surroundings, and the trauma of his loss is replaced by the reassurance of knowing you are there for him. Beyond that, however, his demeanor will be evident in a first meeting, allowing you to fairly size up how he will fit into both your lifestyle and the family dynamic.

Most Older Dogs Have Already Been Trained

An older dog has typically had some basic obedience training and is already familiar with the essential commands that will make life enjoyable for both of you (Come. Sit. Stay.). Equally important, he is more than likely also housetrained, unlike his puppy counterpart. If your household includes very young children, you will welcome the fact that you will not have to endure housetraining and potty training all at the same time.

That said, don't believe the adage, "an old dog can't learn new tricks." It's simply not true. If there is a special need and you are so inclined, these old dogs are eager to please and enjoy the attention and mental stimulation your training sessions can provide.

The Older Dog is Past His Chewing Phase

To anyone who has ever had his favorite shoes, the furniture, an heirloom rug, or the baseboards of his house chewed with endless abandon, rejoice! This is typical puppy behavior but not at all what to expect from a normal, adult dog.

A Senior Dog Requires Less Exercise

Let's face it, as we age we all slow down a bit. You can expect an older dog to be less frisky and rambunctious than his younger counterparts, and in most cases, his requirement for exercise will be far less. This attribute alone makes the older dog a great fit for many family situations and an ideal match for the aging adult as well.

The Perfect Match: Pairing Seniors with Seniors

As they age, like each of us, dogs will have health issues that need to be addressed. Many of these common ailments are addressed in the other chapters of this book [see below] so we'll focus here on the benefits of adopting a senior dog instead—and they are many, especially for aging adults.

Exercise

What better excuse to fire up the muscles and get outside than to walk the dog. A dog's need to regularly relieve

himself and sniff his way around the neighborhood is a great way to get the elderly outdoors, moving joints and muscles, and enabling them to see the beauty around them. Never again will they miss a beautiful sunset, the fall leaves as they change color, or the first signs of spring. Having a dog makes one live in the present and focus on the now.

Companionship

For some reason, a dog creates an invitation to talk. Walking a dog is a great way to meet one's neighbors and build community. For some reason, the wag of a tail has done more to break down social barriers and build friendships than anything we know.

As an aside, dogs are also great listeners. They are known to keep secrets and act positively enchanted even if your singing is slightly off key.

Those of us who have been lucky enough to hold a warm dog in our arms, or share the couch or a bed with one, know the benefits of simply listening to the sound his breath. The sound of a dog breathing has a calming effect.

Lower blood pressure and reduced anxiety

Studies show the health benefits of having a pet. Among those benefits is a distinct lowering of blood pressure and anxiety. We're not surprised.

-- Sherri Franklin and Liz Brooking from Muttville Senior Dog Rescue - Excerpt from the book, Your Dog's Golden Years.

www.SeniorDogBooks.com

www.Muttville.org -

WEBSITES FOR SENIOR DOG CARE and INFORMATION:

<http://www.my-old-dog.com/>

<http://www.greymuzzle.org/Resources/Senior-Dog-Care.aspx>

<http://www.vetstreet.com/dogs/caring-for-senior-dogs-what-you-need-to-know>

<http://vetmedicine.about.com/cs/doggeneral/a/caringseniordog.htm>

<http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/dog-care/aging>

http://www.petmd.com/dog/care/evr_dg_caring_for_older_dogs_with_health_problems

<http://srdogs.com/> - Senior Dogs Project