

time and energy.

The third question is, 'Can we afford it?'. A dog especially is not a cheap pet to keep. Apart from bills, other costs include veterinary care (regular vaccinations, neutering as well as possible illness and injury), boarding costs when you go on holiday, grooming costs for some breeds and registration fees.

Our answers to these questions are important because they determine what kind of animal we should have or whether having a pet is such a good idea after all. Most pet owners would say that any sacrifice in terms of time, energy and money is far outweighed by the enrichment to their lives and the pleasure that a pet gives. For those who are still undecided here are a few guide lines we give to people who are considering having one of ARK's dogs.

So you want a dog? *Adopting an animal from ARK*

Many abandoned or stray dogs and puppies which come to ARK are in need of caring loving homes. We aim to give them as much love and security as possible while they are with us so that they will be gentle and sociable in their new life. Although we welcome enquiries from people wishing to adopt animals, we lay down *certain*

conditions before we hand over any animal for adoption. Anyone who really loves animals will appreciate that the animals future well-being and happiness is our prime concern because once it has left ARK we may have difficulty keeping track of it. We therefore *interview potential owners carefully and thoroughly*.

* Firstly we expect that the person or family will regard the dog as a pet or companion. Puppies or dogs will not be given to people who want them solely for guarding or as toys for their children. Too often people choose a dog by looks without paying attention to its character. At ARK we spend a lot of time getting to know each dog and its character. We try to match dogs and puppies with a particular individual's or family's situation. For example a young or nervous puppy will get stressed in a family where there are young children. A child-tolerant extrovert dog would be better. For an elderly owner, a quiet non-excitable dog, one which doesn't pull on the lead, is more suitable. Remember that only about 20% of a dog's character is inherent, the remaining 80% depends on the way it is treated and kept. Problem behaviour in animals is often due to the lack of understanding or proper training

on the part of the owner. Owners should be prepared to spend time, not only in grooming and caring for their dog but also in getting to know them.

This means including the dog in their daily lives, interacting and communicating with it so that its personality is developed to its fullest potential. Although experience with dogs can help, a willingness to learn is more important. ARK will be happy to give dog care and training information to first-time dog owners.

* No dog should be tied, except for short periods of time. Many stress-related problems such as barking too much, biting people, destroying things, are caused by tied, frustrated dogs. If possible it should be allowed the freedom of house and garden. If this is not possible it should at least have its own enclosed area or be on a running rope. The garden should have adequate fencing and secure gates so that the dog cannot get out.

* The kennel should be made of sturdy wood and raised off the ground. It should be insulated for winter and protected against draughts and rain. Newspapers, straw, carpeting and blankets should be used for comfort and warmth. Adequate

shading should be provided in summer. The kennel should be located where the dog can see people coming and going, and have the chance to socialize with visitors.

* Fresh, clean water should be available at all times.

* Walks should be given with consideration for the dog's age, type and condition. In summer these should be restricted to early morning and evening, especially in cities where pavements get hot. The dog should always be walked by someone on foot, never forced to run beside a bicycle or motor-cycle.

* The dog, whether male or female should be neutered as soon as it becomes adult.

* Regular vaccinations and filaricidal preventative medicine should be given throughout the dog's life. If it becomes ill it should be taken for treatment at a vet's. If its illness is terminal or it is in severe pain it should be euthanized by a vet. On no condition whatsoever should the dog ever be taken to the hokesho or abandoned.