

A few good reasons to adopt a mixed-breed dog

BY CAROL CARIDAD

President, Paws 4 You Rescue



There's no dispute that out of thousands of homeless dogs you're more likely to find the face of a mutt behind a shelter wall than you will a purebred dog.

Many people would prefer to have a purebred dog because of the predictability in temperament, color, size and energy level that a specific breed can offer. However, anyone who has ever lived with a purebred dog and a mixed breed dog at the same time will be the first to tell you that there is something special about their mix breed. A few thoughts to consider before dropping your hard earned dollars on an AKC registered pooch.

Adopting a dog from a shelter is easier on the wallet than buying a dog from a breeder. You might as well save your money to pay for vet care (among other costs like toys!) throughout the animal's lifetime than spending up to \$1,000 or more on a champion blood-line puppy. In our county, shelter or rescue-organization fees start at \$60 and often include vaccinations, a general health exam and sterilization (spaying/neutering).

"Shelter and rescue dogs most of all really need homes because they are often not the first pick of first time dog owners," says Dr. Mary Chavez of Galloway Animal Clinic. Because the parents of mixed breed pups are unknown, as a first-time dog owner you may be hesitant to adopt a dog type that you know little about. Chavez reassures that "mixed breed dogs can have many good attributes of the individual breed, but without many of the common breed related problems." Wouldn't it be great to have a shepherd mix without the worry of hip dysplasia? Also, most mix breeds tend to be less "high strung" says Chavez.

In addition to the health benefits of having a mixed-breed dog — including a longer life span, stronger immune system and more genetic diversity — there aren't any rules against having a mixed-breed dog participate in sporting competitions and other activities. The American Kennel Club extends its Canine Good Citizen program to mixed-breed dogs. The United Kennel Club includes spayed and neutered mixed-breed dogs in its obedience and agility events through the American Mixed Breed Obedience Registry, giving these pets the opportunity to earn even

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advanced obedience and agility titles. Coincidence that the winners of agility contests are often mixed-breed herding dogs? We think not! The intelligence of a Border Collie, plus the endurance of the Australian Sheppard, equals one killer competitor in the agility ring! Mix-breed dogs can also train as search and rescue dogs, therapy dogs and service dogs.

So, the next time you're considering adding a new furry member to the family, why not go "natural" and get mixed breed? The only thing they were "bred" for was to be a loyal companion to you. Plus, no one in the entire world will have a dog just like yours. You can't beat unique. Whatever the background of the mix, its value as a pet ultimately should be based on its health, temperament and how it interacts with people. Those who automatically disregard a mixed-breed dog as a pet may be passing up a chance at the relationship of a lifetime.

"I have often thought of having a pure breed dog," says Chavez, "but whenever we are looking for a new dog, there has always been a mixed-breed dog that has found their way into our family."

Dr. Chavez sees hundreds of dogs throughout her work week, but even she is fixed on the mix.

ADOPT BUTTONS!

Buttons is available for adoption. She is a Golden Retriever/Labrador Retriever mix, under one year old and fun to be around. Go to www.paws4you.org for more information on her or fill out an application to set up an appointment to meet this lovable mixed breed dog.

If you are interested in adopting a dog, becoming a foster home or volunteering with us, please visit us at the Colonial Palms PetSmart, 13621 S. Dixie Hwy., every Sunday (except holidays) from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. or visit our Web site at www.paws4you.org for more information.

Carol Caridad is president of Paws 4 You Rescue, a volunteer-run organization with a mission of saving animals from euthanasia, re-homing abandoned pets, providing necessary medical treatments and educating the community on the importance of spaying and neutering. For more information, address email to carol@paws4you.org or call 786-242-7377.