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WOLFDOGS



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As most of exotic pet species, nowadays wolfdogs are getting into fashion and the number of them is continuously increasing. It is not so difficult to acquire one, indeed, it is much more difficult to choose a breeder to buy from. Most of websites alarm that a wolfdog is not for everyone, but there are so fascinating, aren't they? One would fit so well in your garden...

So you have found 12 weeks puppy only for 200 US dollars, fell in love with these crystal-bright eyes immediately, brought home

And here your problems began.

Neighbours were complaining they could not stand howling anymore while you were in job, you have found antique table turned into sawdust, your lovely puppy has set a toiled in a bedroom and you are afraid to tell wife where Prada shoes are gone.

Guess, it is time to go to the sanctuary, isn't it?

Unfortunately, this is pretty often demise of wolfdogs in unaware hands. Lets see why.

Wolf percentage and breeding strategies

Wolfdogs is definitely not for every owner who admires them. Since true ones have at least little bit of wolf's blood, they may be challenging to manage. So called wolf percentage plays highest role concerning this. What is this? A genetic parameter describing how much genes a puppy got from a pure wolf. The most common breeding strategy is a female wolf mated with a male dog, on average 2 to 8 puppies per litter are born which are described to have 50 % of wolf blood. Then F1 may be bred with other wolf, and F2 will have 75 % wolf content or even more if continuously bred with other high content wolfdogs. Siberian huskies, Alaskan malamuts are often chosen since offspring look mostly wolflike but German shepherds, rottweilers and even standard poodles has been used as well. Wolf content is an important behavioral and price factor. The higher percentage actually is, the „wilder“ animal is expected to be, furthermore, it probably will be much more expensive (low content wolfdogs cost less, high content ones in a range of 600–1400 USD). However, issue is quite delicate since there are several methods to assess wolf content and no reliable genetic test to evaluate pedigree. *Canis familiaris* is originated from *Canis lupus* approximately 14000 years ago and genome is still very similar. Research states that 7 different dog breeds and 26 wolf populations has the genotypes of wolves either identical or it differs by less than 0.8 % (Wayne *et al.*, 1991; Templeton, 1989), so it is barely impossible to treat particular genes as possession of a dog or a wolf. It brings to other common problem – spurious wolfdogs which are pure dogs indeed. Appearance highly depends on breed selected for the crossing, though some wolf-like traits may be a clue for identification, like always black nose, food pads and whiskers, what may carry in dogs in high extent. Hair coat thickness of inner part of ear pinna, shape of eyes, position of tail, width of legs may be also used. However, behaviour must not be forgotten as well.

One more topic concerning pedigree should be taken seriously by an interesting: Shaarloos and Czeckoslovakian wolfdogs are recognised as separate dog breeds by FCI and KC. If wolf look alike is priority, these may be a better choice since both of breeds were developed as working dogs, which should be motivated, active and intelligent.

Temperament

To my opinion, wolfdog is much more like a cat. Most keepers and breeders describe them as personalities you coexist with and certainly not as pets craving to live in your lap. Wolfdogs are said to be highly individual, intelligent, energetic and friendly creatures if trained properly. Otherwise, they end up in

sanctuaries for being extremely destructive, sometimes intolerable for



children due to strong hierarchic sense, howling and incredible talent to escape. Proper training includes exposing animal as often as possible to as many situations, so animal gets use to lots of new people and environment. You must be prepared to be challenged for alpha position of the flock (which is family) at any case, so a person with weak dominant abilities should not consider ownership of any wolfdog. Physical punishments are highly prohibited in training wolfdogs, you will have to find other way to make animal understand not to behave in certain way, like distracting attention or keeping it occupied. They have a habit to dig burrows and chew everything they are able to find if left alone and get bored. Wolfdogs need a lot place to run, it is not a city inhabitant which can satisfy itself with a park full of other dogs. Cage should be with with ground impossible to burrow and escape proof. Wolfdogs are said not to tolerate smaller pets and children due to imaging them as prey, which is supposed to be caught and killed, according to an instinct.

This is common for both wold and dog, but is suppressed in dogs due to domestication. Most of these problems become apparent when animal reaches sexual maturity at 2 years age.

Legislation

This is the most complicated issue concerning wolfdogs. Only in Alabama, California, Montana, North Carolina, Iowa, Oklahoma, Oregon, Ohio, New Jersey, South Carolina, Utah and West Virginia(where import not allowed) they are legal to possess with appropriate identification (microchip) and rabies vaccine. Others, like Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, North Dacota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South dacota and Virginia tolerate them with nescessary permit from State department responsible for wildlife only. In Florida, for example, it costs 100\$ and written exam of competence os obligatory , in Missisipi from \$100,000.00 up to a maximum of \$1,000,000.00. Tennessee, Texas, Nevada, Minnesota Wisconsin does not currently regulate Wolf Hybrids. However, owner must be aware of county and city laws which have more impact actually. Europe also has very liquid laws legislating these magnificent animals, though they are allowed to import and successfully bred in Ireland. U K claims the licence to keep a wolfdog, since it is considered as a wild animal, and study has shown that only 3,5 % owners out of 100 % actually have it. That means, in US it may be tough to find a vet willing to spay, neuter or vaccinate an illegal animal since he wil be responsible in case animal bites anyone. In addition, rabies vaccine is not scientifically proved to be effective in wolfdogs, though most of owners claim to have it done ant trust it. Due to strick rabies control in US, in case of bite, animal must be destroyed immediately and severed head sent to state laboratory to be examined and that is exactly why experienced keepers advise not to register your animal as wolfdog if possible. Being stated as wolfdog also cause greater fear to some people than average dog would. Even though only 12 (and 176 purebred and crossbred dogs) wolfdogs were involved in fatal accident during 1989-1994, there is still a stereotype of being more dangerous hovering in society. to conclude with, one should ponder on carefully why he wants this kind of creature and evaluate his own abilities to provide proper needs to it. It is still an animal of great debates and problems you MAY encounter should be taken seriuosly as not to put your family's safety and animals wellfare into danger.

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