

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONT...

How are Mastiffs with:

a. Burglars, muggers and other miscreants?

Mastiffs tend to react in predictable ways when faced with a threatening person. If their owner is present and a tense situation arises between the owner and a stranger, the dog will usually get between the stranger and their owner, as a sort of giant protective barrier that no sane mugger would reach over. If the stranger does anything to escalate the tension, the dog will probably growl or snarl at the person. This may occur even within a family, if, for example, the owners fight. This may upset the Mastiff greatly and inspire him to protect the party who is on the receiving end of the disagreement.

If a stranger breaks into a house where there is a Mastiff, the Mastiff's tendency is to corner the person and not let them get away, holding them until their owner gets home to deal with the intruder. The dog may snarl or bark or even snap at the intruder if he tries to get away, but usually will not actually hurt him unless the intruder has tried to hurt the dog or has succeeded in hurting him. Dogs are creatures of habit, and it is this characteristic that makes them good guards. If, while your Mastiff is a puppy, you allow strangers like repairmen to come into your house when you are away, the dog will see that as normal for your household and will not realize it is not "OK" for other strange people to come in and do things.

Many Mastiffs, when mature, can recognize something about people who have unpleasant motives, and are watchful or will get in between you and that person. If your dog gets between you and a stranger in a questionable situation, trust your Mastiff! The dog may have sensed something you couldn't recognize in that person.

Because of the intrinsic protective nature of the Mastiff, training as an attack or guard dog is not necessary and to do so may actually be detrimental to the temperament of the Mastiff. Mastiffs are not suitable for attack training or dog fighting and, if raised in kindness and socialized properly, will be a strong, loving companion who will defend his home and family if necessary.

b. Other dogs?

By nature, a typical Mastiff is friendly and aloof toward other dogs. But, as with any breed, they must be properly socialized around other dogs from early puppyhood.

Most cases of Dog Aggression in the Mastiff, or in any breed, are due to this lack of early introduction and stimuli with other dogs. This type of behavioral disorder is usually classified as Species Aggression.

Another type of Canine Aggression is Dominance Aggression. A dog with dominant tendencies may seek to change its position in the pecking order by being aggressive toward another dog. This can really be a problem when there is more than one Dominant Aggressive dog in a multiple dog household. For this reason, it is best not place a dominant Mastiff in the same household with another dominant dog, especially of the same sex. While everything may seem fine while the puppy is young, as it matures it will seek to move up in the pack hierarchy and will compete for dominance with the other dog resulting in family turmoil.

In most cases, proper socialization and adequate stimuli is the best way to head off most aggressive behavioral disorders before they have a chance to develop.

If your Mastiff is aggressive, first, consult a canine behaviorist or professional trainer to determine if the dog can overcome some or all of this behavioral problem through retraining. ALSO have your veterinarian check for physical problems that can affect behavior, especially hormone problems such as hypothyroidism. Often spaying or neutering a dog aggressive dog will limit some of its tendencies to fight or dominate another dog, as well as cool some of the instinctive fighting among males and females in heat. If you are feeding a food that is high in protein, try a food that is around 18% protein, some dogs are sensitive to excess levels of protein.

If your Mastiffs do get into a fight, do NOT get between them. If someone else, known to the dogs, is there, each of you should grab a dog by the rear legs and drag them away from each other and separate them so that they cannot see or get to each other.

c. **Other animals?**

The earliest socialization, at the breeder's, and while a puppy is very young, influences how a particular Mastiff will behave with other animals. You want him to learn what YOU want him to accept while he is still small (this means it has to be done *very* young!) since a larger dog is much harder to control, and bad habits are harder to break than good habits. Some Mastiffs are born with a high prey drive and these dogs will need special training if a multi-pet household is to maintain harmony.

A Mastiff who hasn't been exposed to cats or chickens or farm animals or whatever while young may treat them as prey or furniture, depending on the temperament of the individual dog. Some Mastiffs live well with cats and recognize that the cats have to feel they are the bosses. Others chase cats without mercy even if they are wonderful dogs in every other way. Some dogs that were not raised around horses may sniff once, then ignore them, others may be afraid of them, others interested, etc. The point is, *you* need to plan what to socialize your dog to, so it will know how to behave around the animals that are or will be part of your household. Then it is not up to the highly individual reactions of a half- or fully-grown dog, but your choice.

d. **Strangers?**

A properly socialized Mastiff (which SHOULD be the only kind there is) will stand or sit beside you politely when a stranger is around. The world is full of people who are strangers to you and your dog, but who are nice, normal, decent folks who pose no threat. A Mastiff that is properly socialized (and free of severe shyness) should be polite, possibly aloof, but eventually friendly, after the dog sees your positive reaction to someone.

e. **Young children?**

They are gentle and protective, providing they have been raised with children and are accustomed to them. Small children should not be allowed to play roughly with a puppy; Mastiffs are a sensitive breed that can be permanently traumatized by rough handling.

How long does a Mastiff live?

Books on the breed describe the average Mastiff life span as 6-10 years. A few have lived to be 13 or 14; a tiny handful have lived to be 16-17. Assuming no accidents, an individual dog's life span will depend on its bloodlines, weight, and freedom from significant problems such as blindness, heart disease, hip or elbow dysplasia, spondylosis, immune disorders, etc. ([MCOA Health](#) for more information on health problems). Sadly, there has been an increase in the death of middle aged and younger Mastiffs in the past 10 years or so, although this is not specific to Mastiffs but applies to most breeds.

The increase in hereditary problems in all breeds has had the effect of shortening the lives of a number of animals in each breed, thus bringing down the averages. This is why we emphasize testing for health problems and breeding animals ONLY after they have been proven to be free of evidence of significant hereditary diseases. Choosing your breeder carefully, for awareness of problems and for evidence of specific actions taken consistently over a period of time to prevent these problems, will greatly increase your chances of getting a healthy dog with the potential to live to a ripe old age.

10. Can I get a white Mastiff? What colors can I get?

No, Mastiffs come in Apricot, Brindle, and various shades of Fawn. Since one of the faults listed in the breed standard is "excessive white on the chest or white on any other part of the body", then a Mastiff with much white on it at all is *not* correctly marked according to the breed standard. There are breeds for which white is a correct, acceptable color, but the Mastiff is not one of them.

11. Male vs. female, which is friendlier? more protective? easier to train?

These are all traits that tend to vary more between individual animals than between the sexes. A healthy, alert, intelligent dog who did well on the Puppy Aptitude test and has been well socialized and trained from Puppy Kindergarten onward is your best chance at getting all the above characteristics. Socializing a

dog who started out with a good temperament gives you the friendliest dog. A dog is protective when it has bonded well with you (training your dog is an outstanding way to bond with it) and has at least begun to mature. If you start training very young, the dog learns how to *learn* and will enjoy it more and perform better.

12. Is there anything special I should know about raising a Mastiff puppy - isn't it the same as any other breed?

Due to their rapid growth and their eventual giant size and weight, there are special precautions that should be taken with growing Mastiff puppies.

13. Special Aspects of Raising a Mastiff Puppy

- Even a small Mastiff is destined to be a large dog. This is something that must be taken into consideration when rearing it. As a puppy, your Mastiff should not be allowed to do anything that you would not wish your full-grown Mastiff to do, such as laying on the couch. And because your puppy is going to be such a large dog, it is also a very, very good idea that it receives, at a minimum, basic obedience training. You DO NOT want a 200-pound dog that won't listen to you; this can lead to obvious problems.
- Mastiffs grow at such an astonishing rate that it is best not to force their growth with artificial vitamins and calcium supplements. A good quality dog food is all that they require. A Mastiff is going to get as large as it is going to be, genetically, anyway; allowing them to grow at their own pace will give them a more stable foundation once they get there. Many breeders recommend NOT feeding a 'puppy chow' beyond the first few months due to the high protein content.
- During growth periods your Mastiff puppy is subject to joint injury. You will need to be especially careful during these times to control excessive exercise. A puppy may play at its own rate but should not be encouraged to take long walks, jump obstacles, or any other exercise that will stress the joints. This is not to say the puppy has to be confined. Just use caution and do not allow it to over exert itself. After about 18 months the growth rate has decreased, and the puppy has just about reached its full stature.
- A Mastiff remains a puppy much longer than most breeds. Even though a Mastiff is already quite large by the time it is 6 months old, it is still growing and maturing rapidly. A Mastiff does not reach its full physical or mental maturity until around 3 years of age.
- You will be surprised at how much a Mastiff puppy will drink. Fresh water should be kept available at all times. Drool will accumulate in the bottom of the pup's water dish. Since the pup will not drink its own drool, the dish should be rinsed out at least daily.
- All puppies love to chew. Mastiffs have very powerful jaws, even as a puppy. Some chew toys that are fine for other breeds may not be suitable for your Mastiff. Caution should be used when choosing toys or chew bones because the pup could bite off pieces and swallow them, resulting in intestinal blockage.
- Mastiff puppies also have a tendency to chew, or swallow, rocks and sticks. They should be watched closely and discouraged from doing so.

14. How much training does a Mastiff need?

Because they are destined to be VERY large dogs, basic obedience training should be a part of every Mastiff's upbringing.

Adequate socialization is an extremely important part of a puppy's training. An unsocialized dog, of any breed, can become either fearful or aggressive. A well socialized Mastiff is a stable Mastiff.

Most Mastiffs are easy to train because they are so eager to please, but they are generally more easily trained when young. A puppy's brain develops very rapidly. New information is absorbed at an astonishing rate as they learn from their environment. You want to make certain that WHAT they learn is desirable; therefore, you must guide them in their learning process. Also, just as in any other breed, some individuals are stubborn, dominant, etc., and in such cases the behavior pattern should be identified early, and the training adjusted appropriately to compensate for it.

Unless you plan to compete in conformation or obedience, basic obedience is all your puppy really needs to become a valued family companion. Basic obedience consists of: sit, down, stay, come, walk on lead and proper socialization.

To find Obedience and Socialization classes, contact your local Kennel Clubs and veterinarians. If you cannot locate classes, take your puppy out often to places where it can meet people and other dogs in a friendly atmosphere.

A Mastiff does not need protection training. A well socialized Mastiff has, in essence, been taught what a normal situation is and will be able to sense when something is wrong. Even the gentlest Mastiff will protect its family if it is well socialized and bonded to them.

15. Do Mastiffs have any genetic health problems?

Mastiffs are probably about average when it comes to the number of hereditary health problems that they are prone to. Being a large breed, they are very prone to joint problems. For more information on genetic problems, please refer to MCOA Health.

*** Potentially life threatening or serious:** (these conditions may be inherited or in some cases acquired)

- Joint: hip dysplasia; elbow dysplasia (united anconeal process, fragmented coronoid process, degenerative joint disease); osteochondritis dissecans (OCD) of the shoulders, knees, elbows or hocks.

- Eye problems that cause blindness: cataracts*, retinal dysplasia with detachment, glaucoma*, progressive retinal atrophy (PRA)

- Other inherited eye problems: geographic retinal dysplasia, Persistent Pupillary Membranes (PPM), entropion.

- Hypothyroidism*, immune deficiencies, Wobblers syndrome

- Skin: demodectic mange, deep pyoderma

- Nervous system: myasthenia gravis*, muscular dystrophy*, epilepsy*

- Other: cardiomyopathy*, leukemia, bone cancer*, cystinuria

*** Less serious and/or less common:** (*these conditions may be inherited or in some cases acquired)

- Eye problems: ectropion, iris cysts, macroblepharon (haw), corneal dystrophy*, distichiasis, cherry eye, dry eye, retinal folds.

- Skin: allergies

- Joint problems: HOD (hypertrophic Osteo Dystrophy), degenerative joint disease*, arthritis*, spondylosis of the spine.

- Reproductive: cryptorchid, monorchid, vaginal hyperplasia.

- Heart: murmurs*, pulmonic stenosis.

- Other: hernias, von Willebrands Disease (vWD).

16. What are the common non-genetic health problems in Mastiffs?

Mastiffs are subject to the same common diseases and afflictions as every other breed of dog. Some of the more prevalent are:

- Joint and bone: cruciate ligament rupture, panosteitis, elbow hygroma.
- Urinary tract: kidney and bladder infections, bladder stones.
- Ear infections, hot spots, cysts and tumors
- Reproductive: uterine inertia, pyometra, other uterine infections, mastitis, breast cancer.
- Cancer (bowel, brain, spine, etc. Some forms of cancer are inherited, most are not).
- Other: gastric torsion (bloat), pica (eating rocks, socks, etc.)

17. What other problems do Mastiffs have?

* Temperament:

- Aggressive
- Fearful (inherited or lack of socialization)
- Shy

* Structural Faults:

- Limbs: weak pasterns, cow-hocks, straight shoulders, stifles and/or hocks, elbows in or out instead of parallel
- Bite: very undershot, overshot, crooked teeth, wry (twisted) jaw
- Tail: abnormally short, kinked, bob tail
- Feet: flat (hare foot), loose toes, turned toes or feet
- Coat: long hair, no under coat, excessive white markings (piebald)
- Movement: paddling, crossing, sidewinding, overreaching, lack of drive.

* Problems caused by their size:

- Expensive and difficult to take on an airplane once mature
- Navigating steep stairs
- Getting into small cars
- Happy Tail (Crate Tail) syndrome - prone to abrasions (often accompanied by considerable blood splattering) from wagging against things.

18. What kind of a temperament does a Mastiff have?

Mastiffs are called gentle giants because of their benign and benevolent character. A Mastiff's temperament is so much a part of how it needs to be raised and cared for that many of the questions in this FAQ have incorporated one aspect or another of the Mastiff temperament in their answers.

A dog this big has no NEED to growl or make menacing noises or faces to impress a would-be burglar or mugger. Instead, it can and does simply relax, but keeps an eye on situations where its human family could possibly be in danger of any kind.

Mastiffs have a somewhat contradictory nature, they are very sensitive to the reactions of their people, most Mastiffs can be absolutely crushed by harsh words. Yet Mastiffs can also be among the most stubborn of dogs, so stubborn that you may find it to be an immense challenge to get them to do the same thing over and over for an obedience class (the Mastiff probably would rather do it once and then take a nap or do something different).

Mastiffs, like people, are highly individual. Some are placid, some are high energy animals who need to be kept busy. A lot of any Mastiff's behavior depends on how well it was socialized while young.

19. What does a Mastiff eat?

A Mastiff will eat anything that is not nailed down! Mastiffs, being a giant breed, have the capability of chewing on things that most small breeds can't even get in their mouths.

Oh, you meant food, huh? OK, Mastiffs do best on a food that is in the medium range for protein (20-25%), mid-range for fat (12-18%) and is well balanced for calcium and phosphorus and high in iodine (3-5%). Feeding your Mastiff puppy foods high in protein, calories and fat will push the growth rate and possibly cause joint, ligament and tendon problems. It is best to grow your puppy at a slow, steady rate and not try to make him big too soon. Remember, the Mastiff will grow to what he was genetically programmed to be no matter how fast or slow that you get him there. It is best to take your time and grow them out slowly so as to minimize joint and bone problems and thus have a sound, healthy dog. If the dog food you intend to use is balanced for nutrition do not add supplemental calcium to the diet. Too much calcium causes more problems than too little!

The amount of food is a judgment call, depending on the type of food you are feeding, the age of the Mastiff, and the body condition such as too fat, too thin or just right. Feed a good quality premium food, following the recommendations on the bag and adjusting the amount according to body condition. Do not let your Mastiff puppy or young adult get fat and make sure that you can feel the ribs or at least see the last two ribs when the dog is moving. Fat dogs have many problems with bones and joints, heart, liver, kidney, etc. Generally, Mastiff puppies eat a lot of food while growing, until at least the age of two. An adult Mastiff generally has a slow metabolism and does not eat an exceptional amount of food, normally about the same as a German Shepherd or dog of similar or even smaller size.

20. What kind of living quarters does a Mastiff require? How about crating? Where do they sleep?

The standard answer to this question: Anywhere they want to!

Mastiffs consider themselves to be part of your family and will be most content if they are able to share your home with you. Many Mastiff breeders feel so strongly about the Mastiff's need to be with their human family that they will only sell a puppy to people who guarantee that it will live in the house with them.

Within your home, Mastiffs need a place of their own where they will feel comfortable and secure, just like any other dog. Crates are a practical solution, especially for puppy house training and safety. Wire crates are best so that the pup can see out and because they are harder to chew or destroy. Purchase the largest one you can afford so your Mastiff can grow into it. A pallet by your bed is also a good idea since Mastiffs want to be with their families and it is generally not a good idea to let them sleep on the bed with you. Sleeping with you puts them on the same level as you, so you may wind up with a dominance problem; and jumping off of a bed is not good for the joints when they are young. Most Mastiffs will wind up forgoing any wonderful bed you make for them and will want to sleep on the tile or linoleum floor because it is cooler. Caution is advised here because Mastiffs tend to clunk down on their elbows when lying down and many develop elbow hygromas from the constant banging on the elbows.

The best beds are soft pads with blankets over them or even a baby bed mattress with a cover. Don't be surprised if your youngster shreds his bed as this seems to be great fun to most puppies - be sure to remove any pieces because they can be dangerous if swallowed.

21. Does owning a Mastiff:

a. Cost a lot?

A Mastiff costs more to maintain than smaller breeds due to its large size and weight. Larger crates cost more. More and larger consumables are needed - food, toys and the like. Many medicines, such as antibiotics, heartworm preventative and anesthesia are prescribed based on weight, so these cost more.

A Mastiff on a 'chewing binge' can cause much more damage in a shorter time than smaller breeds.

b. Require a lot of work?

Compared to what? Mastiffs, due to their tendency to be inert (like couch potatoes), and their short hair, do not require as much work as a breed that needs to run a lot for exercise, or needs daily brushing to keep a fluffy coat from getting matted.

A Mastiff with a correct coat only needs a bath when it begins to smell "doggy" or if it has gotten into something that needs to be washed off. Bathing a Mastiff is sort of like washing a hairy Volkswagen except that the VW won't shake and drench you in shampoo or rinse water.

Mastiffs need MODERATE exercise (if this much is too much for you, consider an older Rescue dog), a quality food with moderate protein and fat content, and the normal maintenance activities that any breed requires: clipping toenails, keeping teeth clean, ear cleaning, and regular vet checkups and vaccinations.

The size of a Mastiff means that those toenails will be big and thick, harder to cut than those on a smaller dog. And they will eat a lot more food than your neighbor's poodle. Mastiffs tend to shed twice a year like most breeds, but when a huge dog sheds lightly, it can still add up to a lot of hair to vacuum.

If you are grossed out by slingers and goobers, please be advised that if you own a Mastiff you might spend the rest of the dog's life wiping the walls and complaining about the mess. If you CAN handle it, you will learn tricks like wiping the dog's face as soon as it has finished drinking (to catch the slingers before they are slung).

22. Are you trying to talk me out of getting a Mastiff?

No and yes. No, because it would be wonderful if everyone could experience the joy and satisfaction of being owned by one of these gentle giants. Yes, because, as great and wonderful as they are, they have idiosyncrasies and problems particular to the breed. It would be much, much, much better if you found out that a Mastiff wasn't the breed for you NOW instead of after you've already gotten one.

Mastiffs are not the right breed for everyone. Mastiffs are giants and take up a lot of space on the couch and in the house and car. They have powerful tails that can clean off a coffee table in one fell swoop or knock a small child down with one wag. And the smack of a tail is like being tortured with a rubber hose! Most Mastiff's drool and slobber, especially after eating and drinking. Many leave water trails all over the house after a drink and prefer to wipe their faces on their owners. Mastiffs like to be close to their family and will sit on your feet, lean against you, often put their paw on you and lay their heavy head in your lap. Occasionally people can be unintentionally injured by an exuberant Mastiff. Mastiffs like to follow you wherever you go and be part of whatever you do. They can block doorways with their huge bodies, stand in front of the TV and block your view, and take up large amounts of space with their crates and toys. If you can't handle any of the above, then a Mastiff is not the dog for you!

Not recommended for:

◦ **Old, elderly, infirm** - Mastiffs can accidentally knock down someone who is not steady on their feet; can aggravate back and other injuries; and, since they have the strength of a Rhino, can do unintended harm unless properly trained. If you just have to have one, an older, already trained Mastiff is recommended. See [MCOA Rescue](#) for information about Mastiff Rescue, the best place to start looking for an older, trained Mastiff.

◦ **Small children** - Children under about 6 can be knocked down by an exuberant puppy or adult. Mastiffs are, however, generally gentle with children of any age, but, you MUST supervise them when they are together so that neither the child nor the dog is injured.

◦ **Small habitats** - Mastiffs are not recommended for small apartments or tiny houses since they tend to grow so large. Too many Mastiffs end up in shelters or with Rescue because their owners didn't take their eventual size into consideration. The ideal environment is one with a comfortable house, access to a fenced yard for potty breaks, where the owner knows exactly what they are getting in advance.

◦ **Guard dog** - Mastiffs possess the natural ability to defend their family should the need arise. They should know the difference between friend and foe and pick up on the emotions of their owners. Mastiffs are not recommended as a guard dog for businesses or junkyards because of their instinctual need to bond with people and because they are so strong that they may overdo the guarding and hurt the wrong person. The Mastiff temperament is not suited for formal "guard dog" training due to their sensitive nature and because to do so may permanently ruin their temperament.

◦ **Neat Freaks** - Do not get a Mastiff if you are a person who must have a clean house at all times, can't stand dog hair on everything, or does not like the furniture being rearranged when a Mastiff decides that he wants to sleep behind the couch or under the table. Try to match your decor to the color of the dog hair and slobber.

◦ **Workaholics** - If you work long hours and someone isn't home often, you may want to rethink getting a Mastiff. Mastiffs like people and do not like being left alone all day in a crate or back yard. They bore easily and will find ways to entertain themselves while you are away. A bored, lonesome Mastiff may destroy things or turn their boredom on themselves causing such things as having to replace furniture (or walls) or requiring treatment for lick granulomas. If your home is frequently empty except for your dog, please reconsider getting a Mastiff and may we suggest a toy breed where you could have two to keep each other company or perhaps a cat, bird or reptile.

◦ **Those on a tight budget** - Mastiffs are giants and therefore the cost of upkeep is high. Everything you need to maintain one is expensive from the bedding, the collars, the food bowls, the food, to the vet bills. If you are on a tight budget or do not enjoy spending money on your dog, please reconsider getting this breed. The initial purchase price of the pup will be the least expensive part of owning a Mastiff.

23. Where should I get a Mastiff?

- * Middleman who buys puppies from breeders and resells them? **NO!**
- * Backyard breeder? **NO!**
- * Reputable Breeder? **YES!!** Unfortunately, usually through no fault of their own, a number of Mastiffs end up homeless every year. The MCOA's Rescue Service is charged with helping these distressed Mastiff's find new homes. See [MCOA Rescue](#) for more information.

24. Where can I get more information about Mastiffs?

See [Mastiff Publications](#) for Mastiff information sources and Mastiff Breed Clubs for Mastiff Clubs and contacts.

25. How do I pick a Mastiff puppy?

After you have chosen your breeder and your puppy's sire and dam, you're ready to choose your Mastiff puppy. But which one? The most important aspect of this choice is temperament. Puppies' temperaments vary even within the same litter.

Many people will choose the first puppy that runs up to them and pulls at their pant leg because they think this must be a more outgoing puppy. Not every Mastiff is for every family and this puppy may not necessarily be THE puppy for your family. So how DO you choose a puppy? You should choose a Mastiff puppy that has a temperament that compliments your family's.

Ideally your puppy's breeder will use Puppy Aptitude Testing and family profiles to match puppies with their new owners. Puppy Aptitude Testing evaluates the individual temperament of each puppy. A family profile consists of a series of questions which allows the breeder to assess your family's situation and disposition. The breeder may even ask to choose a puppy for you. If the breeder is skilled in Puppy Aptitude Testing, they can generally choose the best puppy for your family. If the breeder does not

perform these tests, you will need to know how to choose the right puppy yourself.

First, look at your family's situation: Do you have small children? Do you have elderly in your household? Is your family quiet or of gentle nature? Do you already have another dog? Do you feel guilty when disciplining your children or current dog?

If you have answered "yes" to any of these questions you may prefer a puppy with a more subordinate temperament. A dog with dominant tendencies would not fit into this particular family situation. Dogs are pack animals and they will try to establish a pecking order within their pack, and your family will be their new pack.

Subordinate (submissive) does not mean shy or timid. A puppy with a subordinate temperament will simply be closer to the bottom of the dominance ladder (pecking order). A subordinate puppy will not try to dominate the small children within your household, nor will it be as apt to challenge your authority or to compete with another dog for dominance. Note: Timidity (shyness) is a genetic fault in Mastiffs.

If you already have a dog: Is it submissive or dominant? What is its size? Is it male or female? With another dog already in the family, especially a dominant one, consider a Mastiff puppy with a more submissive temperament and/or one of the opposite sex. A submissive puppy will be less likely to challenge your existing dog for pecking order. Males seldom compete with females for leadership position. Smaller dogs can be easily injured if they are involved in disputes with a Mastiff.

Are you experienced with large breeds? Do you NOT have small children nor elderly within your home? Are you comfortable offering constructive criticism? Have you had any dog training experience of any kind? Is your current dog a larger breed of submissive nature? Do you have the time and are you planning to train this puppy in either Obedience, Conformation, or for Canine Good Citizenship? Is your family active and outgoing?

If you have answered "yes" to all of these questions you may wish to consider a puppy with more dominant tendencies. Dominant does not mean aggressive. A Mastiff with dominant tendencies is one which would compete for its place higher up on the dominance ladder. It will be more apt to challenge a child or another dog. There is a difference between a dog with dominant tendencies and a true Alpha dog. An Alpha dog, of any breed, may even try to challenge YOUR authority. It is never a good idea to place a dominant puppy into a home with another dominant dog, especially of the same sex. Properly reared dogs with dominant tendencies can be wonderful, loving family companions.

26. What questions should I ask the breeder (and what answers should I get)?

Before talking to a breeder, before you even start looking for a puppy, DO YOUR HOMEWORK FIRST! Read this FAQ. Check out the books and other resources listed in the [References and Resources](#). Read the FAQs on '[Selecting a Dog](#)', '[Getting a Dog](#)', '[Your New Puppy](#)', '[Your New Dog](#)', '[Health Care Issues](#)' and other subjects (these can be found at <http://www.k9web.com/dog-faqs/>). Go to the library. Read, read, read. Ask veterinarians what they see frequently and what to be aware of. Go to some dog shows and talk to the exhibitors. It is vital to have knowledge BEFORE you get or even start looking for a puppy. Forewarned is forearmed.

This may seem like a lot of research, but you are undertaking a long-term commitment that may last 8, 10 or even more years - longer than a new car, often longer than a house, or even, these days, longer than a spouse! A Mastiff will quickly become a major factor in your day to day existence, with significant influence on your lifestyle. It is up to you to do everything you can ahead of time to ensure that this influence will be a positive one.

A hastily or poorly chosen Mastiff can make your life miserable, and, if subject to health problems, can cause a significant drain on your financial resources.

[Questions to ask a Breeder](#) contains a list of questions that you should ask the breeder of a Mastiff puppy

that you are contemplating acquiring. The '[Getting a Dog FAQ](#)' contains more general questions to ask a breeder.

27. What kind of toys and other paraphernalia do I need for my Mastiff?

* Toys:

Mastiffs are big, strong puppies and even bigger, stronger adults, with a biting capacity of estimated at over 300 psi. Keeping that in mind, most toys and chewies for your Mastiff will have to be durable and able to withstand major abuse. Many toys are suitable for youngsters but not for adults and you will have to add to the toy box as your Mastiff grows older and stronger. When first introducing a new toy, it is a good idea to supervise your Mastiff to see how they handle it. If they rip the toy to shreds and start swallowing lots of it - take it away and try a different toy. Each dog is an individual and what is good for one is not necessarily good for another.

Some good toys to start out with are:

◦ **Puppies - Nylabones, Kongs, Vermont Chews** (stuffed), compressed rawhide bones (not shredded and pressed together, but whole pieces rolled up and compressed under thousands of pounds of steam), carefully selected children's stuffed animals, plastic soda bottles with the cap and cap ring removed (discard if the pup starts to tear apart), knotted rope bones (discard when shredded), large rope rings, soccer and basketballs, various dental chews, hard plastic or pvc balls, safe squeaky toys (human children's are the safest and least toxic), raw or sterilized beef bones, raw fruit and vegetables (No onion!), empty cardboard boxes (remove all staples, loose packing and labels), empty toilet paper and paper towel tubes (pups will empty them for you!) and cow ears. Puppies also enjoy shredding newspaper, but it is messy, and they can get black ink on themselves. It's not toxic though and it won't hurt them, unless they eat too much!

◦ **Adult (over 6 months)** - Same as above but delete the squeaky toys and plastic balls. Add old lawn mower tires, large knotted rope bones, huge nylabones and dental chews, big beef bones (knuckle, femur, etc.), larger fruit and vegetables (edible, biodegradable toys!), giant Kongs, large cardboard boxes (messy, but so much fun).

There isn't a toy made that a Mastiff cannot destroy so please be careful in your selection and keep an eye on them. If any of the toys you have selected become badly chewed, shredded or have chunks missing, discard them and get something else. Each Mastiff is a little different in how it deals with each object. Some will lay down and eat a whole bone whereas others will occasionally gnaw on it and have it last a long time. Some will ignore toys that others covet. Try various things and see what your dog likes. Remember, anything can be dangerous if not used properly and can cause problems for your Mastiff. The best advice is to know your dog and watch it with new toys until you are certain that the toys won't be eaten (except for fruit & veggies) or destroyed in one sitting! Have fun and be creative!

◦ **FOOD and WATER DISHES**

Stainless steel is suggested for several reasons. It is basically indestructible and is easy to sterilize and dishwasher safe. Buy the largest one you can find for a water bowl and at least a 5 qt. size for the food.

◦ **COLLARS and LEASHES**

Up until about 6 months old, most collars will work just fine including the adjustable ones with a plastic snap. After 6 months it is best to use a buckle type collar made of either wide nylon or leather. A six-foot lead is recommended for training and a shorter leash for going on walks. You can use either nylon or leather, just be sure it has a strong snap! For formal training, like at an obedience class, you will need a "choke" chain, usually made with metal links. Your instructor will advise you of the correct size and how to put it on the pup and how to use it properly. Remember: NEVER leave a dog, puppy or adult, unattended with a choke collar on as they can easily get it caught on something, even in a crate, and strangle themselves!

The '[Resources FAQ](#)' at <http://www.k9web.com/dog-faqs/> has an extensive list of dog supply catalogs,

magazines, and organizations. In it you can find listing for things such as weight pulling harnesses, backpacking necessities and everything else imaginable for your Mastiff.

28. Is that a Mastiff in:

- * Beethoven? No, a St. Bernard
- * Cybil? Yes
- * Howard Huges? No, a St. Bernard(?)
- * Marmaduke? No, a Great Dane
- * Sandlot? Yes
- * The Secret Garden? Yes
- * That's My Dog? Yes
- * The Truth About Dogs? No, a ???
- * Turner and Hooch? No, a Dogue de Bordoux (French Mastiff)
- * Meet Wally Sparks? Yes
- * Henry and Mudge? Yes

29. What's the difference between a Mastiff and a Bullmastiff?

The Mastiff is an ancient British breed and its history can be traced back over 2,000 years. The Bullmastiff is a relatively recent breed developed from crossing Mastiff (60%) and Bulldog (40%) stock. The Bullmastiff's shorter, more compact, more muscular look; shorter muzzle; higher energy level and greater stubbornness are derived from the Bulldog part of the Bullmastiff's ancestry.

The most noticeable differences are temperament, the conformation of the heads and overall size of the dogs.

Mastiffs have a mellower, more relaxed temperament, compared to the pushier, more active temperament of the typical Bullmastiff.

The Mastiff's forehead should be slightly curved and the stop (indentation between the eyes) well marked but not too abrupt while the Bullmastiff's forehead should be flat and the stop moderate.

Mastiff males should be at least 30" at the shoulder and females 27 1/2" at the shoulder, with no upper limit for height. Bullmastiff males should be between 25-27" at the shoulder and females 24-26" at the shoulder.

Weight ranges differ significantly between the breeds, with the Bullmastiff being smaller as well as more compact. The Bullmastiff Standard lists 110-130 pounds for males, 100-120 pounds for females. While the Mastiff Standard specifies no weight ranges, males' weights usually run 160 pounds and up, females 120 pounds and up.