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## **IS THE CANE CORSO RIGHT FOR ME?**

Because you have landed here, we assume you must be at least toying with the idea of adding a Cane Corso to



your home. You have doubtless already heard what a marvelous companion a Cane Corso can be. How they are loyal and majestic with a powerful presence, but please also know that THE CANE CORSO IS NOT THE PERFECT BREED FOR EVERYONE.

As a breed, they have a few features that some people find charming, but that some people find mildly unpleasant and some people find downright intolerable. There are different breeds for different needs. There are over 200 purebred breeds of dogs in the world. Maybe you'd be better off with some other breed.

Maybe you'd be better off with a cat. Maybe you'd be better off with goldfish, a parakeet, a hamster, or some houseplants.

DON'T GET A CANE CORSO if you are attracted to the breed chiefly by its appearance. A dog's breed doesn't make you look more MANLY! If you would like a dog because you think he looks tough or makes you look powerful, this is not a reason to get a Cane Corso. Once they grow out of their "cute" puppy stage, the Cane Corso is a ~110+ lb. dog that requires heavy socialization and training by an experienced owner, as they are not a "happy-go-lucky" mastiff - they will not "love" everyone they meet. They are indifferent to other people and dogs and VERY protective of their family and home. CCs are unique, intensely loyal, protective, sensitive and serious dogs - traits that require thoughtful consideration before adopting a dog.

DON'T GET A CANE CORSO if you can't give him a job. This breed needs mental stimulation, in addition to regular training and exercise. Whether her job is greeting customers at a store, herding animals on a farm or helping you take care of your children daily, this breed needs to do something. You CANNOT send them to a dog daycare type of facility and expect them to have their mental stimulation needs met there. Additionally, you cannot leave the dog in the yard for 8-10 hours a day while you go to

work. If they do not get their mental stimulation needs met, they will find other ways to entertain themselves. This can manifest as fence fighting with a neighbor's dog, digging holes and chewing on things they are not supposed to.

Cane Corsos thrive when they can think. They excel at agility, tracking, obedience, protection sports, dock diving and nosework. If you want a breed of dog to compete within a dog sport, a Cane Corso is an excellent choice. They are extremely motivated to please their owners and they enjoy training using positive reinforcement.

DON'T GET A CANE CORSO if you don't intend to educate (train) your dog. Basic obedience and household rules training is not optional for the Cane Corso. As an absolute minimum, you must teach him to reliably respond to commands to come, to lie down, to stay and to walk at your side, on or off leash, and regardless of temptations. You must also teach him to respect your household rules: e.g., Is he allowed to get on the furniture? Is he allowed to beg at the table? What you allow or forbid is unimportant; but it is critical that you, not the dog, make these choices and that you enforce your rules consistently. You must commit yourself to attending an 8 to 10 week series of weekly lessons at a local obedience club or professional trainer and to doing one or two short (5 to 20 minutes) homework sessions per day. As commands are learned, they must be integrated into your daily life by being used whenever appropriate and enforced consistently.

Young CANE CORSO puppies are relatively easy to train: they are eager to please, intelligent and calm-natured, with a relatively good attention span. Once a CANE CORSO has learned something, he tends to retain it well. Your cute, sweet little Cane Corso puppy will grow up to be a large, powerful dog with a highly self-assertive personality and the determination to finish whatever he starts. If he has grown up respecting you and your rules, then all his physical and mental strength will work for you. But if he has grown up without rules and guidance from you, surely he will make his own rules, and his physical and mental powers will often act in opposition to your needs and desires.



For example: he may tow you down the street as if competing in a weight pull trial; he may grab food off the table; he may forbid your guests entry to his home. This training cannot be delegated to someone else, e.g., by sending the dog away to "boarding school," because the relationship of respect and obedience is personal between the dog and the individual who does the training. This is true of all dogs to a greater or lesser degree, but

definitely to a very great degree in the CANE CORSO. While you may want the help of an experienced trainer to teach you how to train your dog, you yourself must actually train your Cane Corso. As each lesson is well learned, then the rest of the household (except young children) must also work with the dog, insisting he obey them as well.

Many of the CANE CORSO's that are rescued from pounds and shelters show clearly that they have received little or no basic training, neither in obedience nor in the household department; yet these same dogs respond well to such training by the rescuer or the adopter. It seems likely that a failure to train the dog is a significant cause of CANE CORSO abandonment. If you don't intend to educate your dog, preferably during puppyhood, you would be better off with a breed that is both small and socially submissive, e.g., a Shetland Sheepdog. Such a dog does require training, but a little bit goes further than with a Cane Corso. The CANE CORSO can, with adequate training, excel at such working competitions as field trials and hunt tests, obedience, agility and tracking.

DON'T GET A CANE CORSO if you lack leadership and a self-assertive personality. Dogs do not believe in social equality. They live in a social hierarchy led by a pack-leader (Alpha). The alpha dog is generally benevolent, affectionate and non-bullying towards his subordinates; but there is never any doubt in his mind or in theirs that the alpha is the boss and makes the rules. Whatever the breed, if you do not assume the leadership, the dog will do so sooner or later, and with more or less unpleasant consequences for the abdicating owner. Like the untrained dog, the pack leader dog makes his own rules and enforces them against other members of the household by means of a dominant physical posture and a hard-eyed stare, followed by a snarl, then a knockdown blow or a bite. Breeds differ in tendencies towards social dominance and individuals within a breed differ considerably.

The CANE CORSO as a breed tends to be of a socially dominant personality. You really cannot afford to let a Cane Corso become your boss. You do not have to have the personality or mannerisms of a Marine boot camp Sergeant, but you do have to have the calm, quiet self-assurance and self-assertion of the successful parent ("Because I'm your mother, that's why.") or successful grade-school teacher. If you think you might have difficulty asserting yourself calmly and confidently to exercise leadership, then choose a breed known for its socially subordinate disposition, such as a Golden Retriever or a Shetland Sheepdog, and be sure to ask the breeder to select one of the more submissive pups in the litter for you. If the whole idea of "being the boss" frightens or repels you, don't get a dog at all. Cats don't expect leadership. A caged bird or hamster or fish doesn't need leadership or household rules. Leadership and training are inextricably intertwined: leadership personality enables you to train your dog and

being trained by you reinforces your dog's perception of you as the alpha.



DON'T GET A CANE CORSO if you want a totally unaggressive and non-protective dog. Most CANE CORSO have an assertive and confident personality. When confronted with a threat, a proper Cane Corso will be somewhat more ready to fight than to flee. Thus he may respond aggressively in situations where many other breeds back down. Most CANE CORSO have some inclination to act aggressively to repel intruders on their territory (i.e., your home) and to counteract assaults upon their pack mates (you and your family). Without training and leadership from you to guide him, the dog cannot judge correctly whom

to repel and whom to tolerate. Without training and leadership, sooner or later he may injure an innocent person who will successfully sue you for more than you own. With good training and leadership from you, he can be profoundly valuable as a defender of your home and family (see also remarks on stability and socialization below).

If you feel no need of an assertive dog, if you are embarrassed by a barking dog at your door, or if you have the slightest doubts of your ability and willingness to supply the essential socialization, training and leadership, then please choose one of the many breeds noted for thoroughly unaggressive temperament, such as a Sheltie or a Golden Retriever.

DON'T GET A CANE CORSO if you are unwilling to share your house and your life with your dog. CANE CORSO were bred to share in the work of the family and to spend most of their waking hours working with the family. They thrive on companionship and they want to be wherever you are. They are happiest living with you in your house and going with you when you go out. While they usually tolerate being left at home by themselves, they should not be relegated to the backyard or a kennel. A puppy exiled from the house is likely to grow up to be unsociable (fearful and/or unprovokedly aggressive), unruly, and unhappy. He may well develop pastimes, such as digging or barking, that will displease you and/or your neighbors. An adult so exiled will be

miserable too. If you don't strongly prefer to have your dog's companionship as much as possible, enjoying having him sleep in your bedroom at night and sharing many of your activities by day, you should choose a breed less oriented to human companionship. Likewise if your job or other obligations prevent you from spending much time with your dog. No dog is really happy without companionship, but the pack hounds are more tolerant of being kenneled or yarded so long as it is in groups of 2 or more. A better choice would be a cat, as they are solitary by nature.

DON'T GET A CANE CORSO if you don't value laid-back companionship and calm affection. A Cane Corso becomes deeply attached and devoted to his own family, but he doesn't "wear his heart on his sleeve." Some are noticeably reserved, others are more outgoing, but few adults are usually exuberantly demonstrative of their affection. They make remarkable eye contact with their favorite people. They like to be near you, usually in the same room, preferably on a comfortable pad or cushion in a corner or under a table, just "keeping you company." They enjoy conversation, petting and cuddling when you offer it, but they are moderate and not overbearing in coming to you to demand much attention. They are emotionally sensitive to their favorite people: when you are joyful, proud, angry or grief-stricken, your Cane Corso will immediately perceive it and will believe himself to be the cause. The relationship can be one of great mellowness, depth and subtlety; it is a relation on an adult-to-adult level, although certainly not one devoid of playfulness – the CANE CORSO is famous for vocalization with its people (the "roo-roo-roos" and the snorts). As puppies, of course, they will be more dependent, more playful and more demonstrative. In summary, CANE CORSOs tend to be sober and thoughtful, rather than giddy clowns or sycophants. A number of breeds retain into adulthood a more puppyish and playful disposition, e.g., Australian Shepherds, Malamutes and others. Quite a few are far more dramatically demonstrative and/or more clingingly dependent, e.g., the Golden Retriever.

DON'T GET A CANE CORSO if you are fastidious about the neatness of your home. Although it is technically true that CANE CORSOs do not shed long coats and do not require professional grooming, they do "blow coat" at least twice a year and your house will be full of "dust bunnies" tumble weeding their way about your house. I don't mean to imply that you must be a slob or slattern to live happily with a Cane Corso, but you do have to have the attitude that your dog's company means more to you than does neatness and you do have to be comfortable with a less than immaculate house. All dogs, like all children, create a greater or lesser degree of household mess. The Basenji is perhaps the cleanest, due to its cat-like habits; but cats are cleaner yet and goldfish hardly ever mess up the house.



DON'T GET A CANE CORSO if you dislike daily physical exercise. CANE CORSOs need exercise to maintain the health of heart and lungs and to maintain muscle tone. An adult Cane Corso should have a morning outing of a mile or more, as you walk briskly, jog or bicycle beside him, and a similar evening outing. For puppies, shorter and slower walks, several times a day are preferred for exercise and housebreaking.

But, more than just walks, you need to "work" your Cane Corso. The CANE CORSO was bred to work hard and the modern dogs still thrive on work. Anyone who owns one should be able to devote at least 20 minutes a day working, training, retrieving or playing with them. CANE

CORSOs that are not worked - both physically and mentally - are prone to mischief and will not "think." These active, intelligent dogs need jobs and responsibilities - it is best if you designate what these jobs are - you might not agree with what your Cane Corso decides is important!



All dogs need daily exercise of greater or lesser length and vigor. If providing this exercise and work is beyond you, physically or temperamentally, then choose one of the many small and energetic breeds that can exercise itself within your fenced yard. Most of the Toys and Terriers fit this description, but don't be surprised if a Terrier is inclined to dig in the earth since digging out critters is the job that they were bred to do. Cats can be exercised indoors with mouse-on-a-string toys. Hamsters will exercise themselves on a wire wheel. Houseplants don't need exercise.

DON'T GET A CANE CORSO if you believe that dogs should run "free." Whether you live in town or country, no dog can safely be left to run "free" outside your fenced property and without your direct supervision and control. The price of such "freedom" is inevitably injury or death: from dogfights, from automobiles, from the Pound or from justifiably irate neighbors. Even though CANE CORSOs are home loving and less inclined to roam than most breeds, an unfenced Cane Corso is destined for disaster. A thoroughly obedience-trained Cane Corso can enjoy the limited and supervised freedom of off-leash walks with you in

appropriately chosen environments. If you don't want the responsibility of confining and supervising your pet, then no breed of dog is suitable for you. A neutered cat will survive such irresponsibly given "freedom" somewhat longer than a dog, but will eventually come to grief. A better answer for those who crave a "free" pet is to set out feeding stations for some of the indigenous wildlife, such as raccoons, which will visit for handouts and which may eventually tolerate your close observation.

DON'T GET A CANE CORSO if you can't afford to buy, feed and provide health care for one. CANE CORSOs are not a cheap breed to buy, as running a careful breeding program with due regard for temperament, trainability and physical soundness (hips & eyes especially) cannot be done cheaply. The time the breeder should put into each puppy's "pre-school" and socialization is also costly. The "bargain" puppy from a "back-yard breeder" who unselectively mates any two CANE CORSOs who happen to be of opposite sex may well prove to be extremely costly in terms of bad temperament, bad health and lack of essential socialization. In contrast, the occasional adult or older pup is available at modest price from a disenchanted owner or from a breeder, shelter or rescuer to whom the dog was abandoned; most of these "used" CANE CORSOs are capable of becoming marvelous dogs for you if you can provide training, leadership and understanding. Whatever the initial cost of your Cane Corso, the upkeep will not be cheap.

Being large dogs, CANE CORSOs eat relatively large meals; need I add that what goes in one end must eventually come out the other? Large dogs tend to have larger veterinary bills, as the amount of anesthesia and of most medications is proportional to body weight. Spaying or neutering, which costs more for larger dogs, is an essential expense for virtually all pets CANE CORSOs, as it "takes the worry out of being close," prevents serious health problems in later life and makes the dog a more pleasant companion. CANE CORSOs are subject to hip dysplasia, which can be costly to treat. Your best insurance against dysplasia is to buy only from a litter bred from OFA-certified parents and (if possible), grandparents. Yes, this generally means paying more. Finally, the modest fee for participation in a series of basic obedience training classes is an essential investment in harmonious living with your dog; such fees are the same for all breeds, although conceivably you will need to travel a bit further from home to find a training class teacher who is competent with the more formidable breeds, such as the Cane Corso. The modest annual outlays for immunizations and for local licensing are generally the same for all breeds, although some counties have a lower license fee for spayed/neutered dogs. All dogs, of whatever breed and however cheaply acquired, require significant upkeep costs and all are subject to highly expensive veterinary emergencies. Likewise all cats.





DON'T GET A CANE CORSO if you are not willing to commit yourself for the dog's entire lifetime. No dog deserves to be cast out because his owners want to move to a no-pet apartment or because he is no longer a cute puppy or didn't grow up to be a beauty contest winner or because his owners through lack of leadership and training have allowed him to become an unruly juvenile delinquent with a repertoire of undesirable behaviors. The prospects of a responsible and affectionate second home for a "used" dog are never very bright, but they are especially dim for a large, poorly mannered dog. A Cane Corso dumped into a Pound or Shelter has almost no chance of survival unless he has the

great good fortune to be spotted by someone dedicated to Cane Corso Rescue. The prospects for adoption for a youngish, well-trained CANE CORSO whose owner seeks the assistance of the nearest Cane Corso Club or Rescue group are fairly good; but an older CANE CORSO has diminishing prospects. Be sure to contact your breeder, breed organization or Rescue group if you are diagnosed as terminally ill or have other equally valid reason for seeking an adoptive home. Be sure to contact your breeder or rescuer if you are beginning to have difficulties in training your Cane Corso, so these can be resolved. Be sure to make arrangements in your will or with your family to ensure continued care or adoptive home for your Cane Corso if you should predecease him.

The life span of a Cane Corso is between 10 and 12 years. If that seems too long a time for you to give an unequivocal loyalty to your Cane Corso, then please do not get one! Indeed, as most dogs have a life expectancy that is as long or longer, please do not get any dog!

CONCLUSION

If all the preceding "bad news" about the CANE CORSO hasn't turned you away from the breed, then by all means DO GET A CANE CORSO! They are every bit as wonderful as you have heard!

If buying a puppy, be sure to shop carefully for a responsible and knowledgeable breeder who places high priority on breeding for sound temperament and trainability and good health in all pairings. Such a breeder will interrogate and educate potential buyers carefully. Such a breeder will continue to be available for advice and consultation for the rest of the puppy's life and will insist on receiving the dog back if ever you are unable to keep it. However, as an alternative to buying a Cane Corso puppy, you may want to give some serious consideration to adopting a rescued Cane Corso. Despite the irresponsibility of their previous owner, rescued CANE CORSOs have proven to be rehabilitated so as to become superb family companions for responsible and affectionate adopters. Many rescuers are skilled trainers who evaluate temperament and provide remedial training before offering dogs for placement and who offer continued advisory support afterwards. Please visit [CaneCorsoRescue.org](http://CaneCorsoRescue.org) to view available dogs and fill out an adoption application.

*Copied, revised and submitted by Alexia Rodriguez from an article by Pam Green "Don't Buy a Bouvier"*

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THANK YOU FOR VISITING THE CANE CORSO ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA!