

# CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GREAT DANE

## IS THE GREAT DANE THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOU?

Even if you've decided that you are ready for the responsibilities and hard work associated with dog ownership, choosing what type of dog is right for you is never easy. Many things must be taken into consideration. Do you have the space for a dog, more specifically a dog the size of the Great Dane? Do you have the time required to train the dog and provide him with the love and companionship he requires? Do you have the financial resources to care for and feed a Great Dane?

Having answered yes to all of these questions, it's time to begin the exciting and fulfilling search for that special puppy or adult

### TAKING CARE

Science is showing that as people take care of their pets, the pets are taking care of their owners. A recent study published in the *American Journal of Cardiology* found that having a pet can prolong his owner's life. Pet owners generally have lower blood pressure, and pets help their owners to relax and keep more physically fit. It was also found that pets help to keep the elderly connected to their communities.

dog. If you've chosen the Great Dane, you've made an excellent selection that I'm sure won't disappoint you. Trustworthy, loyal and dependable, the Great Dane is an awesome companion and friend. Once you have chosen a Great Dane as your own, you have gained a faithful friend for life. The Great Dane is a marvelous family companion who loves children and adults alike. The breed adjusts easily to the home envi-

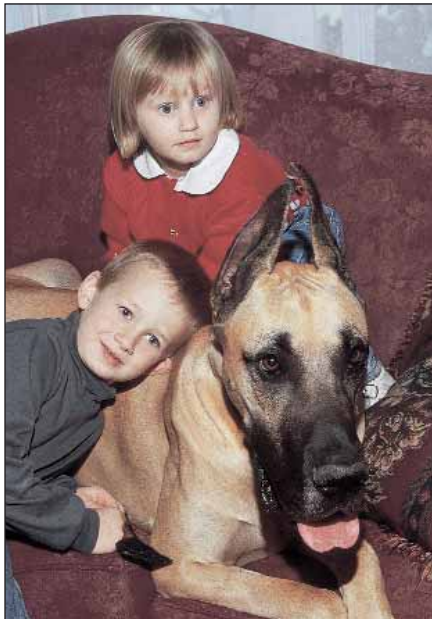


The Great Dane is a canine friend beyond compare for the right owner.

ronment and quickly bonds with his new family members. The Great Dane loves attention and will be very unhappy if he doesn't receive the love and admiration of his family. This is truly a people's dog.

The majestic appeal of the Great Dane is acknowledged world-wide. Most people are familiar with the breed and many have known a family member or friend who has owned one. The general public loves the breed's giant size and regal demeanor; the breed seems to have an instant appeal to people. Once you have seen its magnificent size and beauty up close, the very sight of the Great Dane is rather breathtaking and memorable.

Great Danes  
develop a  
gentle affection  
for children...  
and vice versa.



Most people who decide to purchase a Great Dane will have the breed for life. New dog owners immediately develop a strong bond and fondness for the breed. Rarely will a Great Dane owner switch to a different breed once he has owned one, and he will more likely add another Great Dane to his household!

### **THE GREAT DANE AS A GUARD DOG**

It can't be stressed enough how much of a family dog the Great Dane really is. Once the dog has determined who his lucky family members are, and has adjusted to his new living surroundings, he will sacrifice himself for the safety and welfare of his loved ones. Because of their strong love for family members, Great Danes don't take well to strangers. It will usually take some time before the Great Dane warms to people that he does not know.

There is absolutely no question that the Great Dane is a very intimidating breed. The very sight of one can be a frightening experience for anyone. Although they can be very standoffish to people that they don't know, this should not be taken as a negative trait. The dog is only doing what he feels is his job—to protect his family at all costs.

The Great Dane has a very loud, fierce-sounding bark that will usually discourage strangers

or intruders from invading one's private property or home. Usually, the dog's mammoth size is enough to frighten any person who is senseless enough to challenge him or his family.

Although the Great Dane serves well as a guard dog, his bold appearance should not cause him to be mistaken for an aggressive animal. The breed is very loving and most of them wouldn't harm a hookworm! Yet, if they are provoked, they will defend themselves and their family.

### **CHOOSING A PUPPY OR AN ADULT GREAT DANE**

Deciding on a Great Dane puppy or an adult Great Dane is never an easy decision. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. Acquiring a young puppy allows the owner to mold his new dog to adapt to a functioning living pattern that easily fits the owner's specific lifestyle. An older dog is usually set in his ways and can be difficult to break of old habits. You must keep in mind that even the Great Dane puppy will be considerably large and will require enough space for adequate training and socialization.

Whether you choose a puppy or an adult dog, the Great Dane adjusts quickly to his new home. The puppy's love and desire for family companionship quickly overcome his short-term fear of leaving his littermates and mother



### **NORMAL FOOD INTAKE**

Because of the breed's massive size, many uninformed potential Great Dane owners believe that the breed requires massive amounts of food. The truth is quite the contrary. Despite their large frame, the adult Great Dane eats no more than the average-sized dog. On the other hand, the Great Dane youngster requires a substantial amount of food to support his growing body.

behind for the first time, or, in the case of an adult, leaving his former home for an unfamiliar place. The puppy develops his independence rather quickly and will look to his new owner(s) for the affection and support he so desperately needs. The Great Dane will most likely emulate the

personalities of his new owners. Therefore, it's up to you how well adjusted your youngster or adult dog will become.

### **THE SEARCH FOR THAT PERFECT DOG**

Contacting a reputable Great Dane breeder may require some work and research on your part. Depending on your location, finding a puppy or adult may be either relatively easy or somewhat difficult. A good way to start is by contacting Great Dane or all-breed clubs near your home. You can also contact the AKC and ask for a

list of Great Dane breeders in your area. Another good place to search for reputable Great Dane contacts is a dog show. Acquire a list of shows and make plans to attend. Many reputable breeders and Great Dane experts can be found at dog shows. If you introduce yourself politely, and express your sincere interest in the breed, most Great Dane fanciers will be happy to spend the time answering your questions concerning the breed. If you have the time, watch the Great Danes being exhibited at the show. A tremendous amount can be learned by watching a large class

**Finding a good breeder of Great Danes is not easy, but when you do you will know immediately. A dedicated breeder will *live* Great Danes!**



of Great Danes being judged. Take notes. Learn to develop an eye for the breed, and mark down the types of dogs you think you may be interested in. Then, after the exhibiting is complete, introduce yourself to the handlers and people associated with the dogs that caught your eye.

### **PET OR SHOW DOG?**

Once you have made some reliable contacts, you should make plans to visit some Great Dane kennels. You should decide what type of dog you are looking for, and what you intend to do with him. Are you interested in competing in the show ring or possibly obedience? Or, are you simply looking for a Great Dane that is healthy and has an excellent temperament and pedigree? Make sure to inform the Great Dane breeders you visit of your intentions. This will help them select a puppy or dog that is just right for you and your family.

Keep in mind that a reputable Great Dane breeder will be well versed in what to look for in choosing a new puppy or adult. Take his advice. The breeder will know how his own bloodline develops, and should be willing and able to point out both the good and bad points of his individual line. You should ask to see the sire and dam of the litter if they are on the kennel's premises. Do the puppies' parents look



### **SKILLFUL MANEUVERING**

Despite their huge size, Great Danes have a unique ability that enables them to stay out of the way of family traffic in the home. Frequently, they can be found bunched up in a ball, lounging on the family's couch or living room floor. They are not as clumsy as one would think, but are actually quite skillful in maneuvering safely through tight quarters.

healthy and happy? Are the puppies outgoing and do they appear well cared for?

The price of a Great Dane will vary from breeder to breeder and region to region. Obviously, a potential show puppy will cost more than a pet. Frequently, many people will ask what the difference is between choosing a bitch or a dog, and if the price for each varies. In Great Danes, bitches are usually more gentle in temperament and are a bit more loving. Obviously, if you decide to purchase a bitch, you will have to deal with the fact that she will

likely come into season twice a year. This can be a major inconvenience if you have male dogs on your property that have not been neutered. Of course, the breeder should require you to spay or neuter the pup if it is not a potential show or breeding dog. The male Great Dane will be considerably larger than the female and will often appeal to those individuals looking for a dog with bigger bone and mass. The price for both sexes is about the same. Great Danes have such large litters that the value for each sex remains fairly stable. If you decide to purchase a harlequin-colored dog, expect to pay more because the color is rarer than some others.

### HOW MUCH EXERCISE IS ENOUGH?

The Great Dane is a powerful working dog that was originally bred to hunt large wild game hundreds of years ago. By today's requirements and expectations, the breed doesn't need as much exercise as its size might suggest. In fact, the Great Dane does not require any more exercise than a regular-sized dog. If you have the time to take him on some long daily walks, or for a brief run in a field or park, that should suffice. As long as your Great Dane gets to stretch his long, sturdy legs daily, he will receive the necessary exercise requirements. Combining a good feeding program and exercise will ensure a healthy, attrac-

Despite its large size, the Great Dane does not require more exercise than a regular-sized dog. Activity is, however, necessary—long daily walks or off-leash runs in a secure area will suffice to give your adult Great Dane the exercise he needs.



tive dog. Remember never to overdo exercise with a developing puppy, as strenuous exercise can have long-lasting adverse effects on a puppy's growing ligaments and bones.

### THE GREAT DANE'S HEALTH CONCERNS

Every dog owner's goal is to try and keep his dog as happy and healthy as possible. Fortunately, the Great Dane is a very healthy breed of dog. On the whole, they have very few health problems of which an owner needs to be aware. Provided that you have purchased your dog from a reputable breeder who tests for problems and breeds only healthy dogs, everything should be fine. The breeder should provide a health certificate from his own veterinarian indicating that his stock has been thoroughly checked and are in optimum health. You should also receive a record of your chosen dog's worming shots. You can bring this record along with you to your own vet's office. In all cases, it's recommended that you have your own veterinarian examine the dog very soon after you have purchased him and have him home.

### BLOAT (GASTRIC TORSION)

Bloat is a condition that affects large and deep-chested breeds. It can occur in smaller dogs, but larger breeds are more susceptible.

Great Dane owners must be aware of this very serious condition that involves the release of gas from food in the dog's stomach, which



### DOGS, DOGS, GOOD FOR YOUR HEART!

People usually purchase dogs for companionship, but studies show that dogs can help to improve their owners' health and level of activity, as well as lower a human's risk of coronary heart disease. Without even realizing it, when a person puts time into exercising, grooming and feeding a dog, he also puts more time into his own personal health care. Dog owners establish more routine schedules for their dogs to follow, which can have positive effects on their own health. Dogs also teach us patience, offer unconditional love and provide the joy of having a furry friend to pet!

eventually causes the stomach to twist and turn, cutting off the blood supply and preventing gas and stomach contents from leaving. What makes the condition so serious is that you never know when bloat is going to occur. When it does, there is very little time to seek veterinary care. If the dog isn't rushed into surgery immediately, he likely will die.

### HOW TO PREVENT BLOAT

Research has confirmed that the structure of deep-chested breeds contributes to their predisposition to bloat. Nevertheless, there are precautions that you can take to reduce the risk.

- Feed your dog twice daily rather than offer one big meal.
- Do not exercise your dog for at least one hour before and two hours after he has eaten.
- Make certain that your dog is calm and not overly excited while he is eating. It has been proven that nervous or overly excited dogs are more prone to develop bloat.
- Add a small portion of moist meat product to his dry food ration.
- Serve his meals and water in an elevated bowl stand, which avoids the dog's craning his neck.
- To prevent your dog from gobbling his food too quickly, and thereby swallowing air, put some large (unswallowable) toys into his bowl so that he will have to eat around them to get his food.
- Never let your dog gulp water.



### FOREIGN OBJECTS AND POISONOUS SUBSTANCES

Great Dane puppies can be very curious. Their curiosity can sometimes get them into serious trouble. It's not uncommon for them to pick up rocks or other foreign substances off the ground. In doing so, they may swallow something that is extremely harmful, if not deadly. It's important to keep any small objects, poisonous liquids, detergents or cleaning fluids out of both the young and adult dog's reach. Keep in mind that the Great Dane is larger than most other breeds, and is therefore fully capable of reaching places that ordinary-sized dogs could not.

If you suspect that your Great Dane has swallowed something foreign, induce vomiting at once. Placing peroxide or washing soda in the dog's mouth will force the dog to vomit, and hopefully discharge any foreign substance or liquid he has swallowed. Immediately contact your veterinarian for further assistance.

### TEENAGE SPOTS

This is a condition that causes harmless black or brown spots to appear around the mouth and below the dog's chin. There is no need to panic if your Great Dane develops such symptoms. Although the cause of these spots is unknown, they will disappear in time.

**HEART PROBLEMS**

Great Danes may be susceptible to a serious heart muscle condition known as dilated cardiomyopathy, which eventually causes heart failure. This form of heart muscle defect is common in large breeds such as the Great Dane, Doberman Pinscher and German Shepherd, as well as some of the spaniel breeds. The affected heart is unable to pump properly due to its stretched condition. The cause is quite unknown, though a genetic predisposition is suggested as is a nutritional amino-acid imbalance (which has been observed in the Boxer and Doberman Pinscher). Early signs in the Great Dane include coughing, general weakness and depression, and decreased interest in food and exercise, plus the possibility of an increased heart rate. Sudden deaths have been recorded in many cases of the defect in the Great Dane.

**WOBLER SYNDROME**

Wobbler syndrome is a serious disease that is caused by the compression of the spinal cord, which in turn causes the neck bone to be disfigured. Dogs that are affected with the condition usually cannot support the weight of their rear end, and have a drunken-like movement. It usually develops in dogs that are three to five months of age. Although surgery is available to treat the condition, most attempts are not successful. The

disease is inherited, and any dog that has the condition should be immediately removed from any breeding program.

**HEAT STROKE**

Heat stroke is the number-one summer-related cause of death in dogs. Year after year, despite all the information that's printed in newspapers and displayed on television, negligent dog owners insist on overheating their dogs in hot, sun-baked cars or yards. The Great Dane can tolerate warm weather quite well, but must not be exposed to excessive heat for long periods of time. If your Great Dane appears to be suffering from heat stroke, administer cold ice packs immediately and get him to a cool location at once. Large breeds of dog, such as the Great Dane, will usually get much warmer more quickly than smaller dogs.

## DO YOU KNOW ABOUT HIP DYSPLASIA?



Hip dysplasia is a fairly common condition found in pure-bred dogs. When a dog has hip dysplasia, his hind leg has an incorrectly formed hip joint. By constant use of the hip joint, it becomes more and more loose, wears abnormally and may become arthritic.

Hip dysplasia can only be confirmed with an x-ray, but certain symptoms may indicate a problem. Your dog may have a hip dysplasia problem if he walks in a peculiar manner, hops instead of smoothly runs, uses his hind legs in unison (to keep the pressure off the weak joint), has trouble getting up from a prone position or always sits with both legs together on one side of his body.

As the dog matures, he may adapt well to life with a bad hip, but in a few years the arthritis develops and many dogs with hip dysplasia become crippled.

Hip dysplasia is considered an inherited disease and only can be diagnosed definitively when the dog is two years old. Some experts claim that a special diet might help your puppy outgrow the bad hip, but the usual treatments are surgical. The removal of the pectineus muscle, the removal of the round part of the femur, reconstructing the pelvis and replacing the hip with an artificial one are all surgical interventions that are expensive, but they are usually successful. Follow the advice of your veterinarian.

Above: X-ray of a dog with "Good" hips.



X-ray of a dog with "Moderate" dysplastic hips.

**HIP DYSPLASIA**

Hip dysplasia is a well-known condition that affects many hunting, herding and working breeds. It affects either one or both hip joints, and is a result of looseness, or improper fit, of the ball and socket. The condition can be inherited or caused by a quick weight gain in younger dogs. Although surgery is available to correct the condition, most procedures are very expensive and may not always be successful. Puppies can be tested, but not until 24 months of age can a dog be diagnosed with or cleared as free of the condition. Dogs that test positive through x-rays should not be used in one's breeding program.

**ENTROPION/ECTROPION**

Although not very common, entropion does occur in Great Danes. The ailment involves the inward turning of the eyelid, which results in the eyelashes' scratching the surface of the eyeball. It can be a very painful condition that may eventually lead to corneal ulceration. Fortunately, treatment is available through a veterinarian.

In the condition known as ectropion, the lower eyelid turns outwards. The end result is usually severe eye irritation (redness, soreness, etc.) and possible infection and discharge. This inherited condition can also be treated by ointments and antibiotics administered by your veterinarian.



Lower entropion, or rolling in of the eyelid, is causing irritation in the eye shown. Several extra eyelashes, or distichiasis, are present on the lower lid.