

WOLFDOG RESOURCES

Online:

There is a wealth of factual information on the Internet; however, there is also as much uneducated, outdated, and misleading information online as there is informative, so use common sense. Here are some excellent websites and/or e-mail lists that will provide you with a starting point in your research:

Florida Lupine: www.floridalupine.org

Wolfdog: www.fiu.edu/~milesk/toc.html

WolfdogZ: groups.yahoo.com/group/wolfdogz

Wolfdog Forum: wolfdogforum.com/

Books:

The following books are excellent educational tools and may be purchased from FLA at www.floridalupine.org/books1.htm:

The Wolf: Ecology and Behavior of an Endangered Species. By L. David Mech.

Living with Wolfdogs. By Nicole Wilde.

Wolfdogs A to Z: Behavior, Training & More. By Nicole Wilde.

The Dog's Mind: Understanding your Dog's Behavior. By Bruce Fogle.

The Company of Wolves. By Peter Steinhart.

Behavior of Wolves, Dogs, and Related Canids. By Michael W. Fox.

The Culture Clash. By Jean Donaldson.



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THE WOLFDOG

INTRODUCTION

This brochure was created for two reasons: (1) to provide individuals who are considering acquiring a wolfdog as a companion with information about these animals so they can make an educated and informed decision as to whether a wolfdog is an appropriate companion animal for them, and (2) to provide a list of print resources that people may use to learn about or further their knowledge of wolfdogs.

WHAT IS A WOLFDOG?

All dogs are descended from wolves—some more recently than others. The term “wolfdog” is used to refer to a cross between wolf and dog when the wolf content within the animal is of a more recent inheritance than is typically found in most dog breeds. Wolfdogs are also incorrectly referred to as “wolf hybrids.”

In 1993, the Smithsonian and American Society of Mammalogists reclassified the dog from its own species classification of *Canis familiaris* to that of the gray wolf: *Canis lupus*. The dog is now listed as *Canis lupus familiaris*; therefore, the mix between a dog and a wolf (a wolfdog) should not be referred to as a “hybrid”; instead, such a mix is more appropriately referred to as a “wolfdog.” Additionally, the *Code of Federal Regulations* (9 CFR 1.1) defines wolfdogs as domestic animals.

CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE ACQUIRING A WOLFDOG

 **Do you think wolfdogs make good guard or watch dogs?** They typically do not. This is a selling tactic used by unethical and uneducated breeders to sell more puppies. While all canines are predators, wolves are actually very shy and wary of humans by nature; therefore, dogs with recent wolf inheritance (wolfdogs) do not make good guard/watch dogs as their natural tendencies are to shy away from strangers.

 **Do you have sufficient time in your life to commit to owning and raising a wolfdog?** Because wolfdogs have recent wolf inheritance and wolves are highly social, pack-orientated animals, wolfdogs require a tremendous amount of your time to properly socialize and to maintain.

 **Are you or a family member home most of the time?** If you work or are gone from home for prolonged periods of time, your wolfdog WILL need a canine companion. Wolves are social, pack-orientated animals who need significant companionship; therefore, a dog with recent wolf inheritance will share similar needs.

 **Do you view pets as members of your family?** Wolfdogs are pack orientated, bonding strongly to their human companions. You must learn and clearly understand pack behavior in wolves as your wolfdog will view you much like a pack member. Owning a wolfdog should be a lifetime commitment as being displaced from a pack can cause a wolfdog serious adjustment problems.

 **Do you have neighbors?** If so, be aware that not everyone will appreciate the

howling of your wolfdog. Most wolfdogs howl rather than bark. Sirens (not moons) frequently trigger howling, so keep this in mind if you live near a fire or police station.

 **Do you have children or plan to have children?** Statistics show that children are the most likely to suffer injuries from dogs. Children and small animals can trigger the prey drive found in all canines. By virtue of their size, wolfdogs and other large dogs have the capacity to inflict more serious damage, even while playing. Proper supervision of both animals and children is essential.

 **Are you prepared for the digging, chewing and relentless curiosity of a wolfdog?** All three of these behavioral traits are generally common to wolves and wolfdogs. These animals frequently dig massive dens in the yard, and their curiosity in exploring an irrigation system, a water main, a new implement left outside (or items within the home) can lead to the destruction of said items.

 **Do you have the necessary containment to ensure that your wolfdog is safe from outside harm and escape?** If you are a member of a Homeowners Association, make sure it permits the erection of at least six-foot fencing (with electric lean-ins and ground wire to prevent jumping over and digging). Make sure no one will be able to gain entrance into the fenced area while you are away. Adequate fencing and containment does NOT mean chaining, cabling or tying an animal to an immovable object. This form of containment is unacceptable and is responsible for countless canine social problems, including aggression.

 **Do you have the monetary resources needed to properly maintain a wolfdog?** Wolfdogs and other large dogs can be expensive to feed and to maintain. Some veterinarians

neither understand wolfdogs nor will they accept wolfdog owners as clients, so you may need to search farther afield for vet care. Like dogs, wolfdogs should receive annual vaccinations and be administered monthly heartworm prevention.

 **Are you willing to learn about wolf behavior and alternative training methods?** Wolfdogs are very intelligent and can be quite independent when compared to many other dogs. Wolfdogs do not respond to harsh training methods, but can be trained using positive reinforcement. In addition, an understanding of wolves' vocal and body languages is essential in the understanding and training of a wolfdog.

 **Are wolfdogs legal to own in your State, City AND County?** Wolfdogs over 74.9% wolf are illegal to own in Florida without a special Class II wildlife permit granted by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. City and county ordinances may be more restrictive, so you should also check your local statutes. *NOTE: Florida laws will be changing soon.*

 **Think a wolfdog is the dog for you?** Animal Control and humane societies generally have a no-adopt policy on wolfdogs, so if you change your mind about owning a wolfdog after you have acquired one, these facilities will be unable to help. Agencies specializing in wolfdog rescue are usually full and can offer very limited assistance. Therefore, if you question your ability to make a lifetime commitment to a wolfdog, please do not get one.

For more information about wolfdogs, please visit our website at www.floridalupine.org.