

## “Is Your Lifestyle Ready for a Dog?”

By Jocelyn Stone

So you're thinking of getting a dog in the land of 10,000 lakes? Adding man's best friend to your household can be ~~very~~ rewarding, dogs are loyal and interactional. Research shows that having a pet can reduce loneliness and depression. However, ~~but there is also a certain level of responsibility and commitment involved. And there are some aspects specific to living in Minnesota~~ to be time commitments, breed qualities and temperament, pet expenses, and knowing how to meet your dog's daily needs especially in extreme climates like Minnesota should be considered before making your final decision.

### Time

~~You will need to~~ C consider your schedule and the amount of time that you ~~are able to~~ will devote to a dog. Depending on the size and breed, it will ~~need to be let out~~ require a potty break every six to ~~10~~ ten hours, ~~for potty breaks; and~~ and puppies require ~~even less time in between~~ breaks more frequently. If you work 12-hour days, accommodations for potty breaks need to be made, and if you want to hit happy hour after work, you'll need to make a quick stop home before meeting up with friends.

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In addition to ~~potty regular~~ breaks, ~~most~~ dogs need daily exercise ~~thrive when walked on a regular basis, usually daily.~~ Most dogs thrive when walked.

Walks provide necessary exercise and a release for pent-up energy, especially if they're confined for long periods. Dogs, like children, are creatures of habit. ~~!;~~ if possible, try to walk your dog around the same time of day, and they will fall into an easy routine. They might even remind you it's time for their walk when you forget!

~~Walking a dog during a Minnesota winter can be challenging, but is definitely possible. You might want to shorten or alter your winter route to allow your dog its needed exercise while exposing it to the elements for less time.~~

Also keep in mind that dogs ~~have been bred to be~~ are social creatures; they enjoy spending time with their human family. Even if you're ~~taking care of~~ providing regular potty breaks and walks, dogs can become listless, even depressed, if they ~~don't're not~~ get enough socialization throughout the day~~s.~~ If you ~~are someone who~~ spends ~~very~~ little time at home, ~~this might be an indication to wait for~~ consider getting a dog until when your schedule is more accommodating.

### Energy Level and Temperament

~~Energy level and temperament can become a~~ A large factor in choosing the right dog is knowing each breeds energy level and temperament. If you contain a ~~large,~~ high-energy dog in a small apartment, you ~~ll-could~~ find yourself with a pet that's practically climbing the walls. Or if you want a running companion, you wouldn't want a new friend who gets winded after three

~~blocks. Or if you want a dog to take five-mile runs with you every day, you don't want to find yourself with a new friend who gets winded after three blocks.~~

~~The type of~~ Also consider your household and each breed's temperament.  
~~you have should also be considered when thinking about getting a new dog.~~

Some breeds ~~can be~~ are more aggressive than others; if you have small children or other animals in the house, make sure you select a temperament that ~~the type of dog you have will~~ plays well with them.

Local pet experts carry information about dog breeds and their characteristics. Based on your needs and limitations, experts can give sound advice on the breeds and temperaments that would be most suitable for your lifestyle. (See sidebar).

## Expenses

Consider the costs for dog ownership before you make the investment.  
As any dog owner can attest, ~~the bills of regular dog maintenance~~ shots, veterinary examinations, and preventative health care maintenance can add up quickly. ~~In addition to food, you will have expenses for: initial shots for puppies, preventative health care maintenance, treats and toys, grooming, kennel fees if you travel, and unexpected health care.~~

Pet insurance can be an excellent investment. Expenses for long-term medication alone can mount up quickly. Depending on the insurance type and company, it can cover ~~some or all of expenses such as~~ regular shots,

spaying/neutering, medical procedures and medications. ~~Expenses for long-term medication alone can mount up quickly easily~~

Each ~~breed is different, and each individual~~ dog is different. Some breeds are more high-maintenance than others. Some dogs have chronic health problems that may or may not be indicative of their breed. ~~And, while~~ other dogs ~~can go through their entire lives~~ live without illness or injury ~~their entire lives~~.

~~In addition to vet care, you will have expenses for food, treats, toys, grooming, kennel fees if you travel, and unexpected health care treatments.~~

Money concerns shouldn't automatically be a deterrent to getting a dog, but ~~be confident that you are able to cover the costs. consider what potential costs can be and be confident that you are able to cover them.~~

~~Local pet experts carry a lot of information on different breeds and their characteristics. Based on your needs and limitations, they are able to give sound advice on the breeds and temperaments that would be most suitable. (See sidebar).~~

## Climate Control

~~Extreme Minnesota weather~~ It can ~~be make it~~ tricky to ~~in decide deciding~~ what kind of dog ~~is might be~~ appropriate ~~for the extreme Minnesota weather~~. It's important to get a dog that can withstand ~~and thrive in the~~ harshest of ~~\_~~ winters. ~~However, you also want a dog that isn't going to suffer through a~~ ~~and~~ hot and humid ~~Minnesota summers~~. Choosing ~~the right a type of~~ breed ~~for the region~~ can

be easy if you make the appropriate accommodations for ~~the weather~~Minnesota seasons.

Walking a dog during a Minnesota winter can be challenging, but it is definitely possible. ~~Ice-Ice~~ and packed snow can ~~create~~lead to dried and cracked paw pads ~~during repeated walking;~~, so have your dog wear boots ~~for the pawsto~~ help alleviate this possibility. In addition, smaller breeds may get cold easily, so ~~you might want to~~ consider ~~some type of~~dog clothing to keep them warmer. You might want to shorten your route to minimize your dog’s exposure to cold winter elements yet still allow your dog’s needed exercise.

Larger breeds that are more suited~~meant~~ for colder climates can be kept comfortable ~~in the summer~~ if ~~kept~~housed in cooler, well-ventilated areas during the hottest part of ~~summer~~the season. Make sure your pooch has ~~access to an~~adequate water supply. All dogs need water, and it is especially necessary ~~for any type of dog, especially~~ if they spend extended amounts of time outside during warm weather months.

Ultimately, a dog can enhance and enrich your life. ~~Research shows that having a pet can reduce loneliness and depression. Dogs are loyal and interactional.~~ Just remember that there is give and take. Before you commit yourself to a dog for its lifetime, ~~just~~ make sure that ~~you’ll-you’re ready~~be able to maintain your end of the relationship.

**Resources to Help You Choose Your New Furry Friend** (sidebar)

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- Golden Valley Humane Society - <http://www.animalhumanesociety.org> – Provides information on pet behavior and training, newsletters and community services, adoption services.
  - Pet Haven Inc. of Minnesota – <http://www.pethavenmn.org> – This organization rescues and re-homes cats and dogs, spays and neuters to reduce overpopulation, educates the public about responsible care of companion animals, and advocates on behalf of companion animals.
  - Minnesota Valley Humane Society – <http://www.mvhspets.org> (Checked original link-went to a Merrimack Valley Health Services, Inc. Address changed to the current Minnesota Valley Humane Society link. OK?)– Their mission is “to prevent and alleviate animal suffering through shelter, adoption, education, collaboration, and community outreach; and to strengthen the relationship between people and companion animals.”
  - Breeder Retriever - <http://www.-breederretriever.com> – Not local, but the website is designed to create awareness about dogs and to help people make informed decisions regarding their pets.
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