

ADOPT A SENIOR PET - IT'S A GOOD IDEA

Admittedly a senior pet is not for everyone, but neither is a puppy or a kitten. When you adopt an older pet you have instant knowledge; you'll know from the start important things like their full grown size, personality, grooming requirements, any quirks that they may have developed.

Officially it seems all dogs over 7 are called senior dogs. I am actually writing about dogs over 5. One reason to adopt them is that in the excitement of rescuing a dog, many times everyone wants to see the puppies, but ya' know in about 9 months they'll look like dogs. These older dogs need homes and can bring years of pleasure to those who adopt them. I had a pitbull that I ran with until he was 14, I had a Queensland that I ran with until she was 13 and a Mutt-Mutt I ran with until she was 15. They lived to be 14, 15 and 17 years old. I had so much fun with those dogs. There is no puppy on earth I would have traded them for.

Old dogs can learn new tricks. I took my 9 year old Queensland to doggie school and she was the start student, probably because she had a mature brain and could focus on what she was doing. On the other hand, most older dogs do have some training; at least the basics like they don't potty in the house, they know not to jump on everyone and respond to being called. They have some calmness and balance and don't do the stupid things puppies do. Many have even more training, than the basics. You will get years of "laid back four-legged living" with an older dog. In general senior dogs are appreciative that you picked them. We have so many people say "My dog actually acts grateful that it has a home." We hear this often enough that we feel like there is something to it. The bottom line is older dogs are adorable, full of fun and so much easier.

Don't get me wrong I love puppies. I had one named Sammie; got him at 7 weeks old. I wouldn't have missed it for the world. Sammie was an immensely calm, sane, balanced puppy (he was the unusual). If your intioit puppies are fun, if you're not don't do it.

My last piece of advice is this. It will do your heart good to give an older dog a home. The puppies usually go really fast and the older dogs stay longer. Remember everybody ages, including us humans, and we all need love and security and care. Adopting an older dog will do your heart good. My rule for myself is - I always want my pet to die before me. I do not want to leave behind an older or old animal and have it end up in a shelter. We have had dogs

as old as 17 end up in our shelter. We do find kind hearted humans to take them in (that's what we do at Sammie's Friends) but even an hour is too long for an old animal to be disrupted from their home and be put in a noisy shelter.

If you prefer cats, everything I've said about dogs is true for cats. One of the joys of my life was adopting an 18 year old cat from the shelter who had some medical problems. My vet told me she might only live a year or two. "I said I'll give her everything I can and make this the best years of her life." I know that's kind of sad to think a kitty that age might have her best years with me, starting at 18. What happened to the other 18?" I don't think she'd had a very good life. I named her Plummie and loved her so very much. She loved me but Curt was her man.

To be honest if you get a really old animal it will cost more in vet bills. But if you have the money and many do what could you better spend your money on than knowing you made some little creature's life happy even if for a short while. On the selfish side I often think to myself, as I approach "old" - I hope someone is as kind to me as I was to Plummie. Animals never stop teaching us about kindness, something there seems to be a need for these days.