

"DOG"

Since the movie "Dog" came out with Channing Tatum in the role of Jackson Briggs and the Belgian Malinois, LuLu, I have had at least six requests to write my monthly article about Belgian Malinois' and asked to discourage the every day dog owner from adopting one as a pet. The movie is about an army ranger, Jackson who finds solace in a very unlikely companionship with a Belgian Malinois, Lulu, who had been the military dog of his friend who was killed in the military.

The two (Jackson and LuLu) are suffering from the aftermath of being in dangerous conditions in the military. They save each other from a rapidly deteriorating life for both of them.

The people I talked with to put this article together fear that just as with the Dalmatians after 101 Dalmatians and the Chihuahuas after the Beverley Hills Chihuahua movies people will feel the need to rush out and get one and then; the shelters fill up with them a few months later when the fad has worn off. While this adoption/surrender scenario was not good for the Dalmatian or Chihuahua breeds, it would be an absolute disaster for the Belgian Malinois.

The Malinois is very intelligent and without a job can be aggressive and destructive. One person told me she had her house chewed up twice when leaving her Malinois home alone. This dog needs to lead a mentally challenging life. This is why they make great police dogs, military dogs, search and rescue dogs. They are intense, diligent, tenacious and alert. They need mental stimulation. Living in a kennel in an animal shelter is a nightmare for one of these mentally alert and physically with boundless energy.

This is not a dog that you can leave home for the day while you go to work and spend five minutes of ball throwing at the end of the day. These dogs need at least 90 minutes of intense exercise a day. But just taking the dog on a long run will not suffice. That will take care of the physical energy but won't address the needed mental stimulation. In general they aren't great with other dogs, because of their intense loyalty to their handler and their aggressive tendencies that are

best used for police and military work. Getting them another dog to keep them entertained is really not the solution.

The Malinois will most likely not be great with smaller pets in your home as they have a strong prey drive and will go after cats, rabbits and even small dogs.

They bite

hard and hang on and this can lead to death or injury for small pets and not good for small children. This extreme biting is normal for the breed and can be utilized in police or military work.

I talked to two people who unknowingly took on a Malinois having no idea what they were getting themselves into. One became a dog trainer when she realized how much time

and effort she was going to need to put in to satisfactorily coexist with her dog.

Both used the word "nightmare" to describe what they unknowingly brought into their life.

In the case of these two people their dogs have both passed on now and in spite of the trials and tribulations of having a Belgian Malinois they describe the breed as truly amazing in their intelligence and athleticism. They both put in an extraordinary amount of effort to manage their dog as a pet. In retrospect they loved their dogs and wouldn't do it again.

I talked to a trainer who trains search and rescue dogs and he says his favorite dog to train for search and rescue is the Malinois because they are so intelligent, athletic and focused. He loves working with these dogs to train them for a very important job. He also says "Please discourage people from getting them for a pet." Your average pet owner

cannot and will not make this dog the top priority in their life and do the necessary things to keep the dog from being destructive, because it is bored.

Most people can't exercise their dog 90 minutes a day and spend another 90 minutes coming up with mentally stimulating activities for the dog.

The one thing that will keep a lot of people from getting this dog is that they usually sell for \$3,500 to \$9,000. This is a big investment for a pet dog. Lest you think I don't like these dogs. I do. They are beautiful and amazing and perform their work impeccably. They just weren't meant to be a household pet. I am sure someone reading this will say

"I knew a Malinois who made a fine pet." There is always that one exception somewhere, isn't there, but they will be few and far between.

Go see the movie! It's quite a story!

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