THE PET CONNECTION
By Deb Waldron
Owner Pampered Paws Salon

WHAT DOG BREED IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

 Of the 166 dog breeds recognized by the AKC which would be the best match for you? Size, coat care, temperament, and health issues are a few of the things to consider when choosing a canine companion. If you've already found your perfect canine match good for you! For the rest of you folks, here are some insights into a few of the dog breeds that I hope you might find fun, interesting and maybe even surprising.

 First of all, most AKC breeds were designed with a certain purpose in mind, in other words, they had jobs to do! Ever wonder why your Shetland Sheepdog nips at your heels, or runs circles around the kids in the backyard? Well it's because Shelties were bred to herd sheep, ducks, and other small farm animals. Why doesn't your cute Lhasa or Tibetan Spaniel like everyone that comes to your house? Because, believe it or not, they were bred to be guard dogs! Can't keep your Golden out of the neighbors pond, or from carrying his leash in his mouth when you're on walks, well, he's practicing being a retriever. That Beagle of yours who likes to run off every time you let him out to pee, he's just found the scent of something good and plans on tracking it down. All the terrier breeds were bred to kill "vermin", that's why they will dislocate your leash arm every time they see a squirrel or a chippy. Wonder why you can take your Weimaraner or Brittney Spaniel for 18 walks a day and they are still not tired out, it's because they were bred to run ahead of a hunter all day long and flush birds. Siberian Huskys are truly beautiful dogs, but don't try to get one to come when you call. They are all about running fast, in a straight line, for long distances; "mush" anyone? Well, I think you get the picture, it is important to know what a dog was bred to do before choosing a canine companion.

Other considerations that will help you to determine which dog breed is right for you include size, temperament, and coat care. For instance, some large breeds actually make better apartment dogs than their smaller cousins. The general rule of thumb is the larger the dog the more laid back the personality. Greyhounds, Borzois, and Deer Hounds, are particularly quiet and sweet tempered, and possess a "lounge around" disposition that often makes them better apartment dwellers than some of the more yappy, hyper toy breeds. Also, as a rule of thumb, small dogs and small children are not a good combination. On the other hand, Toy breeds make fabulous companions for elderly singles, or mature couples. Sporting breeds love everyone, but tend to be very energetic, and need lots of exercise. They also tend to bring the outdoors in with them in terms of odor and debris. Long coats are beautiful, but require lots of time brushing, or professional grooming.

One last important consideration are breed related health issues. For instance Dachshunds can be prone to back problems. Poodles have a genetic predisposition towards epilepsy and diabetes. Yorkshire Terriers often struggle with dental issues and tooth loss. Some larger breeds such as the German Shepard, Rottweiler, and Labrador Retriever can suffer from hip dysplasia. And the giant breeds, which include the Great Dane, Bull Mastiff, and Irish Wolf Hound, have shorter life expectancies than smaller dogs. Cocker Spaniels are prone to ear infections and skin allergies. While all dogs can have health issues, it's important to be aware of the challenges you might face with a specific breed.

Have some fun researching the different dog breeds to determine which one would be right for you and your family. Every AKC breed has websites devoted to educating the public about that particular breed of dog. Go to a dog show and talk to breeders. Ask friends who own a breed you are interested in what pros and cons they've discovered about that breed of dog. Happy Puppy Hunting!

PAWS FOR REFLECTION

"My next door neighbor's two dogs have created more shovel-ready jobs than this administration."   - Gary Johnson