

Veterinarian says some dogged diligence beforehand good way to find perfect fur-ever friend

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(Phys.org) -- Feeding a stray dog is a kind gesture -- and one that may generate a new best friend.

Adding a dog to your home should not, however, be a spur-of-the-moment decision, said Susan Nelson, a veterinarian and clinical associate professor in the Pet Health Center at Kansas State University's Veterinary Health Center.

"Do your homework first," Nelson said.

A large breed, such as a Great Dane, or medium-to-large breed, such as an active [Labrador retriever](#), will not typically be a good match for an owner with a small home or apartment. A border collie might seem a better size and choice, but it's a breed that requires a lot of physical activity and [intellectual stimulation](#).

Want a four-legged pal to run with? Consider a medium-to-large dog that will thrive on physical activity, rather than a basset hound, known for its slow and steady pace, Nelson said.

To learn more about a specific breed and its needs, Nelson recommended talking to a veterinarian and searching the Internet or books for more information.

Nelson said the size, type and location of the [pet owner](#)'s dwelling should be considered, as well as whether there is a yard -- perhaps fenced -- or other area available to exercise a dog regularly.

Inviting a dog into your home also involves a financial commitment, she said.

In addition to a purchase price or adoption fee and initial veterinary checkup, costs typically include: collar, leash, spill-proof dishes, registration and licensing, cost of initial and periodic immunizations, cost of spaying or neutering, regular physical and dental checkups, periodic flea and tick treatments, [veterinary care](#) as needed, grooming, dog food, treats, toys, bedding and boarding -- when needed.

Deciding who will be the primary caregiver for the dog and how responsibilities can be shared within the family or with roommates is recommended, said Nelson, who also advised considering the ages and life stages of members of the household.

A small dog might seem a good choice for an older adult, but a very small dog might be a tripping hazard. Timing also can be an issue, as a family with a new baby may want to wait until they have more time to dedicate to the dog.

Nelson said doing the homework first may avoid the need to put the dog up for adoption later because it was not a good fit for the family or the family's situation.

More information: More information about the human-animal bond and animal care is available: ome.ksu.edu/webcast/human-animal-bond/ .

Provided by Kansas State University

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