

# Owning an Alaskan Malamute

The Alaskan Malamute is an arctic sledding and hunting dog. They are very attractive but can be a challenge to own and are not suitable for everyone. They require an owner who has a very good understanding and respect for the origins, traits and needs of the breed.

The Malamutes' strongly entrenched survival instincts include hunting, digging, being competitive with other dogs, eating just about anything and pulling very hard on lead.

Being a large, strong and sometimes exuberant breed, they are not suitable as a children's dog or for the elderly. The Malamute is by no means the ideal family pet, there are many other breeds of dog much more suited for that.

They are useless as a guard dog as they love all people, but their friendliness often does not extend to other animals.

## Before you get an Alaskan Malamute

When choosing a dog you need to consider if the breed is going to suit your lifestyle, and if your family is going to be able to cope with the needs and traits typical of that breed.

Owning an Alaskan Malamute is a decision that must not be made without a great deal of consideration, research and objectivity. If you are a fit active person and love plenty of outdoor activities in which a dog can participate, you may find it very rewarding to own an Alaskan Malamute.

Be realistic: if you are not going to be able to provide a caring and suitable long-term home, please don't get a Malamute just because it "looks good".

## What to expect from the Alaskan Malamute

Be aware that the Alaskan Malamute is quite likely to:

- **dig up your lawn and garden**
- **not be friendly towards other pets**
- **require very good fencing and strong gates**
- **be very intelligent, but not necessarily obedient**
- **be difficult to train**
- **pull on lead**
- **run away if let off lead, not come when called**
- **be too strong for children or the elderly to walk**
- **hunt other animals**
- **not be friendly to other dogs, particularly those of the same sex**
- **require a lot of exercise, obedience training and mental stimulus**
- **do just about anything for food**
- **shed massive amounts of hair at certain times**
- **need a lot of brushing but not much washing**
- **be friendly and happy to greet all people**
- **not be a good guard dog**
- **not bark, but occasionally howl**
- **require an owner that understands the breed and is firm but fair.**

Of course each dog is different - not all Malamutes will display all of the above behaviours and there can always be the odd exception to the rule. However, if you are not prepared to have a dog that does any of the above, then the Alaskan Malamute might not be the breed for you.

Be aware that young puppies may not display these behaviours or traits, however as the Malamute matures it is very likely that most of these behaviours will develop.

## Things you need to consider:

- Are you going to be able to provide a permanent home for the Malamute?
- Are you financially able to support a large dog? Take into account feeding, worming, registering, vet bills etc.
- Do you have time to exercise a Malamute every day?
- Are you fit enough to cope with a large, strong dog and will you be able to walk it?
- Are you confident with large dogs? The Malamute needs a firm owner they can respect.
- If you have another dog, are the two going to get along?
- Do you have a reasonably big yard with excellent fencing and good gates?
- Are you prepared to always walk your dog on lead?
- Are you prepared to put up with a dog that may do some extensive "garden remodelling"?

## Purchasing a Puppy

It is important that any pet dog is healthy, has a good temperament and is at minimal risk of hereditary defects.

Any purebred puppy should only be purchased from a reputable and responsible breeder, even if it is just to be a family pet. These breeders will keep the mother and litter mates together until at least 8 weeks old, be very discerning about where their puppies go, will have done the necessary hereditary disease testing and will have pedigree papers and other documentation about the puppy and its background.

Paying a bit extra for a puppy from a reputable breeder is money well spent and could save you from costly health and temperament problems later on. Read the articles on health problems, selecting a breeder and puppy in the AMCV information pack for more details.

## If you already have a dog or other animals

Dogs: Be aware that Malamutes are not always friendly towards other dogs. If you already have a dog, we strongly recommend you get a Malamute of the opposite sex. The Malamute may well need to be separated from your other dog(s) at feeding times to avoid fights.

Cats & Other Animals: Malamutes and cats can co-exist quite happily in many cases, and most often do when the Malamute is brought up with the cat from puppyhood. However be cautious if you are adopting an older Malamute it may well think the family puss is something to be hunted.

Malamutes cannot be trusted around livestock or wildlife, and will not always come when called. If you have caged animals make sure the cages are strong and in a confined area away from the Malamute.

## Activities for the Malamute

Being a working dog, owners must be prepared to spend plenty of time exercising their Malamute. Malamutes love to satisfy their natural heritage and working instincts with activities such as sledding, weight-pulling and backpacking.

Malamutes are not suited to guard work or any activity that involves being off-lead. The Malamute enjoys and needs obedience training, however they may well not achieve high standards in this activity.

## Further Information

If you would like more information about the Alaskan Malamute, purchasing a puppy or adopting a dog please phone Sandy or Ralph on (03) 9714 8540, or contact us by email to amcv@bigpond.com.