



Indigo Mountain

Animal Sanctuary - Wildlife Education

No companion animal should be obtained without thoroughly considering a number of factors. Obtaining a wolfdog takes some serious considerations. Your decision to bring a wolfdog into your life should not be taken lightly. It requires some soul searching and a lot of research.

Are You Ready for the Wolfdog Lifestyle?

The first thing you should ask yourself is why do you want a wolfdog, and be very honest with yourself.

- ◆ Are you so fascinated with the mystical, wild wolf that you want to “own” a little piece of the wild?
- ◆ Perhaps you want to boost your self-image or use your pet as a status symbol. “Look at me, I own a wolf”
- ◆ Are you looking for a watch dog?
- ◆ Maybe you like the challenge of working with a highly intelligent, inquisitive and intense animal

The second thing, take a hard look at your lifestyle.

- ◆ Where do you live? In the country, in the city or the suburbs. Do you own a home or do you live in an apart-

ment? Do you have a yard? How close are your neighbors? Most wolfdogs do not thrive well in the city environment nor do they do well in small apartments. They are active animals with a need for exercise and a lot of mental stimulation. They do much better when they have a yard to play in.

If you rent a home your landlord may not be ok with your choice of companion. Many insurance companies refuse to cover a home with a wolfdog.

Wolfdogs howl. It's a fact of life. They sometimes howl as the sun rises, when a siren goes by or just because they can. You may think it is a beautiful song, but your neighbor may not.



- ◆ Are you single or in a long term relationship, and does your partner feel the same way you do about adding a wolfdog to your life?

You need to stop and think about what you expect your life to be like for the next 15 years. A wolfdog can live a long time and you will be responsible for him for his natural life. So what happens if you find that perfect mate and they aren't thrilled with your choice of a companion animal? Wolfdogs are loving animals and bond very heavily to their family. They do not always re-home well and the resources for finding a new home are very slim. It is your responsibility to make sure that the wolfdog is the right companion for your entire family.

- ◆ Do you have children, or plan to have children in the next 15 years?

The wolfdog is a large, powerful and rambunctious animal and is not the most suitable companion for a small child. Their propensity for high prey drive mixed with their intensities is what can make them unsafe. A small child squealing, crying or running through the room is all it needs to stimulate the predator-prey response. It is possible to control the prey drive to a certain degree with extensive training, but no large breed dog is totally safe around small children.

◆ What other pets do you live with?

You must take your other pets into consideration before bringing home a wolfdog. Small animals will stimulate the prey drive much like a small child can. The sheer size and power of a wolfdog can be dangerous to small dogs, cats, bunnies and birds even in play.

If you already own another large dog you will also want to take the sex of the new wolfdog into consideration. Female wolfdogs are notorious for having same-sex aggression. A neutered male and spayed female will live together much more harmoniously.

◆ Do you have a stable job that does not require frequent moves?

If you do not have a stable job the long term commitment of caring for your pet might be difficult to meet. Wolfdogs thrive on routine and they do not always do well with the instability of moving from home to home. The time of building and the cost of constructing a new outdoor enclosure at each new home can be quite daunting as well.

◆ Do you make enough money to care for the animal in the style that is necessary?

Wolfdogs are costly animals to care for. Containment, veterinary care and food all add up. Veterinary or medical costs for a large breed animal are almost double that of most normal sized dogs. They often require specialized diets. Their toys must be much more durable to withstand the wolfdog's jaw power and tendency to shred things. Their crates need to be industrial strength. One of the most costly items on the checklist is their containment. A simple 4' fence purchased at a local hardware store will usually be insufficient. Many wolfdogs require 6-8' fencing with dig guards, lean-ins and electric fencing to hold them securely.

◆ Do you expect to have a Better Homes and Gardens home and garden?

Many wolfdogs love to dig. They do not differentiate between your prized flower bed and a mound of dirt. If it is earth that can be moved, it will be moved. They will cache toys, bones and even your cell phone or TV remote control if given the opportunity. They will make little dirt beds to keep cool in the summer time if you are lucky. If you are not, they may dig a huge tunnel that is large enough for the couch! Their large paws may also beat down or wear the grass to the point that your once beautiful backyard resembles more of a moonscape.

Your backyard may also take on more of an institutional look as many wolfdogs require tall, strong fencing to keep them in. Your neighborhood association may not appreciate this and it may be against local building ordinances.



Many wolfdog owners tell stories of ruined carpets, torn up linoleum, shredded couches, chewed up cabinets and even holes in the drywall. The wolfdog is an extremely intelligent, curious animal and if not mentally stimulated they easily become bored and may become destructive. They are also quite good at problem solving. This can lead to tearing apart the couch cushions while trying to figure out just where that squeak came from. They don't understand it was the couch springs and not a tasty little mouse. When they want to get out of a room they can easily tear apart a door frame. They also break windows to gain their freedom with ease and don't seem to mind if it is a window on the top story of the house.

Crunch the numbers

- ◆ How much time do you have to dedicate to your pet?

Wolfdogs require a lot of exercise, play and quality time with their owners. They must be heavily socialized, not just for the first few months of their lives, but for their entire life. They are extremely social animals and require a lot of one-on-one time with their owners.

How much do you know and understand about canine behavior and training?

- ◆ Many canine breeds have watered down behavioral patterns, however wolfdogs are the entire package. You must have a thorough understanding of various behaviors and know how to read a wolfdog's body language and vocalizations. Wolfdogs can and should be trained for obedience and manners at the very least. They are intelligent and capable of so much if their owners will put in the effort. They deserve more than being relegated to a pen in the backyard.



Are wolfdogs legal in your community?

- ◆ Wolfdogs are heavily regulated in some states and many cities, counties or municipalities. Many places have breed specific regulations that bans them altogether or places restrictions on their ownership. The authorities do not fall for the "I didn't know" excuse. If you bring a wolfdog into an illegal area it can be confiscated by the authorities and often euthanized. Don't make a mistake that will cost an animal its life. Investigate what you can and cannot have BEFORE you bring your pet home and don't be selfish. If they are illegal in your area, please do not obtain a wolfdog.

Have you looked at:

- ◆ Neighborhood association rules or covenants
- ◆ City or township regulations for the number and types of pets allowed
- ◆ County regulations
- ◆ State regulations

Will your vet care for your wolfdog?

- ◆ Not every veterinarian is experienced or willing to care for wolfdogs just as some vets will shy away from caring for exotic pets. You will need to locate a vet that is not only willing to treat your pet, but one who has the experience of dealing with them and the thorough knowledge needed to treat them.





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We're on the Web

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What do you expect from your companion?

- ◆ Are you looking for a pet that will lay at your feet while you relax by the fire? Do you want it to go on vacation with you? Hang out at the dog park? Go on camping trips? Maybe hiking in the park? Sitting outside the coffee house down the street?

Before you obtain your wolfdog please take your lifestyle into consideration. What do you like to do and what do you expect your wolfdog to do with you. Don't set your new companion up to fail. Make sure the breed of dog or content of wolfdog matches your lifestyle.

Are you prepared to have a companion for life?

- ◆ Shelters are overflowing with pets that people have discarded. Some of these pets are lucky enough to be re-homed. Wolfdogs bond very strongly to their human families and often have a very tough time being re-homed. They can become fearful or aggressive. Their adjustment and rehabilitation time is long and difficult IF they are one of the lucky ones and given a second chance. All too often wolfdogs surrendered to shelters or humane societies are euthanized immediately. There are very few true wolfdog sanctuaries and most, are overflowing with wolfdogs.

There is no such thing as a Wolfdog Utopia. Many misguided people seem to think that sanctuaries offer miles and miles of freedom to roam and be wild like their ancestors. That is simply not the case. Every wolfdog sanctuary in the country has the animals housed in cages or enclosures. Some are held in packs while others are in pairs. They are cared for, fed and given a some attention but is far from being the utopia some believe they are.

Please, if you truly care about wolfdogs

- Do your research
- Visit with rescue people and sanctuaries
- Talk to private owners
- Get the facts and ask all the questions BEFORE you obtain one.

Wolfdogs are Companions for Life...not until the fad is over
